



Safe

Florida superintendent Chuck Calhoun has implemented a strict program to keep his employees out of the danger zone

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Keeping

Got safety? Chuck Calhoun does. And the golf course superintendent of John's Island Club in Vero Beach, Fla., is proud of it. He should be. The club's safety program is the major reason the maintenance crew hasn't experienced an accident in more than two years.

"And that's remarkable considering we had to clean up from three hurricanes ... and a myriad of other related problems," Calhoun says.

Calhoun has a list of safety programs that are strictly enforced. Safety begins inside the maintenance facility, where the maintenance crew has restricted access to all areas where equipment is serviced and repaired.

"Only the mechanics and supervisors are allowed in these areas," Calhoun says. "This helps to avoid slipping on floors and the many other hazards in this area."

Calhoun also has implemented a written and enforced personal protective equipment policy for all machinery that crew members must follow. It covers everything from weed eaters to backhoes.

In addition, Calhoun screens a monthly safety video program for crew members. Attendance is mandatory and a test is given after the screening.

Calhoun's safety program has zero tolerance for employees who use headphones and cell phones while working on the course. "These devices may prevent an employee from hearing a problem with his or her machine and take away the full attention needed to operate [it]," he says.

The safety program also includes a written hazard communication program that's

reviewed in its entirety every six months. "We have one of the employees read the program word for word to his and her peers to stress the importance of realizing the hazards not only in the workplace but even in the home," Calhoun says.

The most important part of any safety program is teamwork, says Calhoun, who stresses to his employees, "When in doubt, get help."

"It's very important to let your employees know that asking for help in any situation, whether it involves lifting or trying to free a piece of equipment that may have failed or is stuck, is encouraged to avoid over-exertion," Calhoun says.

Golfdom asked other superintendents to think about their maintenance operations for a moment in regard to safety and then to answer these two questions:

1. What are the most important products for worker safety that you and your crew use day in and day out?

2. What new safety products would you like to see introduced to the golf industry and why?

Jim Nicol, certified superintendent for Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn., said eyeglasses and ear protection are the most important products he and his crew use.

As far as new safety products go, Nicol

said he would like to see a more user-friendly and more comfortable respirator introduced to the market.

Steve Numbers, superintendent of Westfield Group Country Club in Westfield Center, Ohio, said an insurance company owns his club so "everything related to worker safety is important." Numbers cited eye and ear protection and also said hard hats and sunscreen are important products as are gloves, respirators, spray suits and other heavy-duty apparel, such as chaps for tree-maintenance projects.

Numbers doesn't have any requests for new safety equipment, but that doesn't mean he wouldn't like to see some items improved. "I do think that improving comfort is important," Numbers said. "People will then complain less."

Hard hats that cover the ears from the sun and include liners that help keep workers' heads cool in the heat would be solid improvements, he noted.

Michelle L. Frazier-Feher, certified superintendent of Boston Hills Country Club in Hudson, Ohio, also stressed that earplugs and safety goggles are products her crew doesn't do without. She also cited safety switches on equipment as integral to her course's operation.

As far as new safety products, Frazier-Feher said "a far-fetched idea would be warning devices for staff and golfers [to detect] errant golf balls."

Makes good safety sense. ■

