

When the Environmental Protection Agency does its job, which among other things is to review pesticide registrations, how many of you have

ever logged on to its Web site to make a comment in favor of keeping a registration? You say you didn't know a particular product was being reviewed? Why not? Are you telling me that your state and local associations don't have someone checking the Federal Register periodically? You mean no one on your board is assigned to at least check the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) government relations Web site once in awhile? Do you have a government relations committee?

In the face of peer-reviewed science that shows that a chemical has potential to do harm to the environment, then by all means, remove it from the shelves. But when some products have been targeted because of isolated incidents or circumstantial evidence and the best science available still detects no negative results under normal label use, then you'd better speak up if you want to keep some of those broad-spectrum, cost-effective materials available for use. Your silence is the consent for the cancellation.

I'm not saying that we'll win every time we speak up, but your continued silence greases the slippery slope for wholesale bans of products and services. Just look at Canada, New York, San Francisco and other hotbeds of armchair agronomy. The anti-chemical, anti-fertilizer factions have taken the fight to the local government level, and they are dividing and conquering the turf industry in guerrilla warfare against the products we use to manage turfgrass.

They line up at local government meetings to toss out unverified quotes and statistics and unsubstantiated anecdotal comments about dead fish, dead birds and dead ecosystems, laying the blame on turfgrass products used on home lawns, golf courses, farms, ranches and any other enterprise that manages the land.

Let me be clear. A factory dumping pollutants into the river must be stopped. Smoke stacks need the best scrubbers to emit the cleanest air possible, and pesticides and fertilizers

Take Responsibility for Your Profession

BY JOEL JACKSON



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must be used responsibly. But as long as commercial and municipal waste-water treatment plants dump their effluent into local waters, clamping down on the small percentage of chemical and fertilizer users is all flash and no substance.

The problem is most of you don't pick up the phone or pen or computer keyboard to set the record straight. I can write an opinion, but only you and your local association can tell the real story of what happens in your city or region. The public never hears your voice, only the accusatory prattling of the activists. A letter from the GCSAA to EPA is great, but it's only one letter even though it represents 16,000 golf facilities.

What EPA, state regulators and local and federal legislators must see and hear are hundreds or thousands of letters, e-mails and phone calls.

If a product is only "nice to have" and not critical, then don't bother. But if you refuse to take a stand against the activists' clamoring and neglect to educate lawmakers and administrators about the real impact their decisions will have on your job, your golf course and your business, then you deserve what you get.

If nematode, insect, weed and disease management aren't issues at your golf course, then just keep quiet and go about your business. Neglect to inform your boards and green committees. Ignore alliances with other green industries in your area, and refuse relationships with regulators. And whatever you do, don't write your local commissioners and newspapers to tell them the whole story.

I'm certain someone else will do it instead.

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