



# You And Your Machines

It helps to consider the following items when tackling the “Equipment Maintenance Repairs” line item

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**W**hen sitting down to tackle my budget every November, it seems like I can sail along fairly smoothly until I get to the line item, “Equipment Maintenance Repairs.”

This seemingly simple little line item usually sends my smooth ride bumping and veering off toward the ditch. Not only is it a large item (for me, the only line item with a bigger dollar figure is wages), but it tends to be more complex than anything else in the budget.

For me, it has always helped to consider the following items when tackling the “Equipment Maintenance Repairs” line item. I suggest you ask yourself the same questions:

- How many new pieces of equipment will you be adding to the fleet?
- Will all the pieces be brand new, or will you be adding on some used equipment?
- Considering the new purchases and leases, how many of the older units will be used as backups and how many will be sold or traded in? Basically, is your fleet growing in size because of the new items or staying virtually the same?
- How much was spent the previous year on this line item?

- Was the figure higher or lower than budgeted?
- Historically, do you budget high enough in this area?
- Have you created any significant no-mow zones on the golf course, cutting back on mowing hours?
- Are you reconsidering any different management practices that may influence equipment hours? Some examples: adding or subtracting a midsummer solid-tine aeration; increasing or decreasing greens topdressing throughout the season; increasing or decreasing plant growth regulators or fertility rates; changing tolerance levels on weeds; changing tolerance levels on “brown” rough conditions in mid-summer.

■ Will your crew size be larger or smaller than the year before?

■ Is your crew full of long-time quality employees who you trust not to abuse equipment? (Usually a high turnover equals more abuse of equipment.)

■ How much has the price of things increased versus last year? Oil, especially, is an item to keep an eye on.

■ Are you happy with your equipment technician?

■ Is he or she keeping up with preventive maintenance?

■ Does this person need additional training in any specific areas (like hydraulics or grinding)?

■ Are you and your assistants keeping the crew alert to maintain the equipment? Is everyone checking oil daily and greasing the zerkers that need to be greased?

Of course, not everything can be anticipated (a worker running a fairway mower out of oil, for example, or a golf car ending up embedded in the base of a cedar tree), but going through this checklist before deciding on a monthly figure is bound to make your numbers more accurate.

It just might help make the worst line item in your maintenance budget a little less of a headache. ■

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