



Once a new pump station hits the ground, it's up to superintendents and their crews to preserve that newness.

Protecting the Pump Station

BY ANTHONY PIOPPA, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Perhaps no single piece of equipment on a golf course is more vital to the survival of the turf than the pump station. A mere burp or hiccup in its operation and the grass suffers. A failure of a pump nears the top of the list of worst nightmares for any golf course superintendent.

But simple preventive measures, some of which add not a dime to the operating budget, can increase the life of a pump station and ease superintendents' minds.

Something as simple as closing the control panel door exactly how it was designed to be shut can add years to the life of a pump station, says Rob Kerrigan, product manager of engineered pump systems for Rain Bird.

He says he has encountered a number of situations where the door was not

secured properly, which allows debris and material buildup to occur inside the panel. In one case, he was amazed to find the panel door was being held shut by a broom handle.

For older pumps, Kerrigan recommends checking the weather strip around the door panel to make sure it's still doing its job of forming a tight seal.

One maintenance factor that is often overlooked is inspecting wiring on not just old pumps, but new pumps as well, Kerrigan says. Within 90 days of installation there should be an inspection to look for loose wiring caused by the vibrations of the pump. Kerrigan says it's not uncommon for the problems with new pumps to be traced back to wiring.

John Murtaugh, customer service direc-

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Inexpensive maintenance can increase its life and bring superintendents peace of mind

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Paying almost daily attention to a pump station is the best way to prevent it from failing.

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tor for ITT Flowtronex, agrees that keeping an eye on electrical connections is vital.

"It can do catastrophic damage," he says of a wire that has become detached.

Kerrigan is adamant that those performing an inspection must make safety a priority. "Verify the panel is dead, and make sure the power is turned off," he states.

Depending on what area of the country the golf course is located or how often the pump is run, inspections by a technician need to take place one to four times a year, Murtaugh says.

He also says those in charge of the pump station, whether it is superintendents or irrigation technicians, should spend enough time in a pump house to understand normal operating conditions.

"He should smell it; he should listen to it," Murtaugh says. "If he walks in one day and something is different, he'll know it."

The two men point out that general keep

up on scraping and painting will extend a pump's life. "Keep it cleaned up and wiped down," Kerrigan adds.

Murtaugh says that rust outside and inside a hydro tank on a system that is more than 15 years old can be dangerous. "It becomes a real safety hazard as well as a maintenance issue," he adds.

To keep a pump station (especially an older model) running at its most efficient, which means saving on electricity and water, Murtaugh says it's important to observe the pump run through a cycle.

"You want to make sure it starts when it's supposed to start and when it shuts off to stay off," he says.

The bottom line, both say, is that paying almost daily attention to a pump station — tightening bolts, checking wires, keeping the area clean — is the best way to prevent it from failing.

"It's not a fire-and-forget type of item," Kerrigan says. ■

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