

# Murphy's

## of Golf Course Maintenance

**N**ow that the pressure has eased somewhat for the poor souls who tend turfgrass, allow me to introduce someone who undoubtedly paid a visit to you at one time or another this year.

This is someone who shows up at the most inopportune times, like when the heat is on, the grass is dying and you don't have a second to spare. He lurks in the shadows until . . . BAM! . . . a head blows out and floods a fairway.

Or maybe he's involved in the three days of rain in the middle of your aeration schedule, or the hydraulic leak from the fairway mower when you're getting ready for the member-guest.

I'm not talking about salespeople. On the contrary, I've known salespeople who have shown up in these times of trouble and cancelled their next couple appointments so they could help out.

This someone is sneaky and sinister.

No doubt you all know him. He's the inventor of — and lord over — the minor setback.

He's the quintessential pessimist, ready at any time to make your job just that much more difficult than it already is.

I'm afraid I have no photographs of him, as he is a faceless entity, yet he leaves behind something we all know and dread: his credo.

Why is it this sinister someone always shows up at the most inopportune times?

By Jim Black,  
Contributing Editor

His name is Murphy. And here, for the first time, I share with you Murphy's Laws of Golf Course Maintenance:

### **Murphy and Irrigation**

We haven't nicknamed it "irritation" for nothing. From the pumphouse all the way down to the misters in the flowerbeds around the clubhouse, your irrigation system is a veritable playground for our hero. Let's examine:

**LAW** — No matter how many things you load on to your utility vehicle and take to the site of an irrigation break, the



Murphy appeared at the U.S. Open, where Bethpage Black Superintendent Craig Currier (right) had to deal with several days of rain.

# Laws

thing you need most will be waiting for you back at the shop.

**LAW** — In the process of trying to locate the source of the lake water that's bubbling up out of the middle of a fairway, you'll undoubtedly be piling the dirt right on top of the place where you should be digging.

**LAW** — In order to repair your next irrigation break, you'll have to allot yourself one extra day. Why? Because no matter how many slips, elbows, T's, and knock-on couplings you have on the shelf, you will inevitably have to order something else for this particular repair.

**LAW** — Ironically, you may find that some of the best grass on the course is in a location where you have an irrigation problem.

**LAW** — Most major irrigation breaks will happen between 3 o'clock Friday afternoon and 6 o'clock Monday morning.

## Murphy and Staff and Equipment

If your equipment has any age on it, Murphy is there waiting patiently to remind you in his own special way that you need new equipment that your club is unwilling or unable to purchase. And your crew? I've no doubt they're part of Murphy's extended family.

**LAW** — When you do take delivery of a new piece of equipment, two of your oldest pieces of equipment will break down for good.

**LAW** — Most equipment malfunctions requiring a tow-in will happen at the furthest point from the shop.

**LAW** — Any piece of equipment that enters a pond will do so in such a way as to require diving, not just wading.

**LAW** — The most urgent time of the year

that you need something from a supplier will be precisely at the same time they have closed for inventory.

**LAW** — The closer you get to holiday week-ends, the greater the chances for stomach virus outbreaks among your crew.

**LAW** — The more urgent the project, the greater the need for your crew to "swing by" the clubhouse for another free soda.

## Murphy and Club Politics

Sometimes it doesn't matter how well you play "the game," you find yourself on the losing end of the stick anyway.

**LAW** — The board member you have your next big argument with will undoubtedly be elected the next club president.

**LAW** — Once in awhile, you have to meet with the owner or an influential club member. You'll remember that meeting is in five minutes — right after you've dug up a break and find yourself covered in dirt and mud.

**LAW** — The more prepared you are for your next aeration project, the greater the chance a tournament will be scheduled on top of it.

**LAW** — If you're responsible for golf car maintenance, the only golf car that will break down, get a flat, or run out of gas during an important tournament is the one driven by the person who decides where next year's tournament is held.

## Murphy and the Weather

Everyone has a favorite saying about the weather. The one I prefer is, "If you don't like the forecast, just change the channel until you find one you do like."

**LAW** — In New York during the U.S. Open last June, the chances of rain stopping were directly proportional to

the chance of the next front coming through with more heavy rain.

**LAW** — Out West, just when you thought you had enough 100-degree days in a row, the forecast was for 105.

**LAW** — In the mid-Atlantic transition zone states, whenever the forecast was for a 90 percent chance of showers, your course was in the 10 percent.

**LAW** — [Insert law for your particular geographic region here].

This is not a definitive list of Murphy's Laws. As a matter of fact, I have plans for part two, but I'll need your help. We want to hear from you about your own experiences with our anti-hero, Mr. Murphy. Just drop me an e-mail at [greenkeeperjim@yahoo.com](mailto:greenkeeperjim@yahoo.com). ■

*Jim Black is a contributing editor to Golfdom.*

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