



# A Call to Arms

By Michael R. Semler

"Waiting for a Disaster". That was the headline last month in a weekly newspaper in Madison. What, you may ask, are they talking about?

Well, it is not a nuclear accident, it is not our foreign policy in Central America, and it is not about the war on drugs. It is, however, about the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) which was enacted by Congress in 1986.

The EPCRA created state emergency response commissions and local emergency planning committees to work on emergency response plans in cooperation with facilities covered by this law. For golf course superintendents, this may mean providing detailed information to local authorities about the type, location and amount of certain chemicals used on our golf courses.

Why did this article bother me? Better yet, why am I writing this editorial? It seems to me that golf course superintendents are looking down the barrel of a gun. A loaded one at that! Once again, a barrage of federal laws has come down the legislative pipeline, only this time it seems that many superintendents, for a multitude of reasons, have not noticed or followed this new legislation.

We, as a professional group, are constantly promoting ourselves as knowledgeable and law abiding in our field.

We have had significant input into the implementation of AG29. We've been involved in lawsuits around the state that have concerned us. We have, in the past, shown a respectable and knowledgeable presence in the face of those who create and make the laws. This is good!

However, I sense a general lack of knowledge on the fore-named Community Right-to-Know laws. Whether we like them or not (the paperwork and money involved is formidable) they are the law and noncompliance caused by ignorance or laziness does not cut the mustard. We **must** comply. It is the law.

I also contend that we are not alone in our confusion concerning the EPCRA. Multiple numbers of other facilities using hazardous substances are not complying either. Let's not worry about them.

Great strides can be made by golf course superintendents in the area of promoting a **great** public image. With all the negative press concerning pesticides in the environment, we certainly don't need to make golf courses and their maintenance practices a headline story because someone forgot to file the proper forms with our state.

I am, in a sense, calling us to arms! Obviously, nobody is going to come to you and walk you through the paperwork and fee schedules. It has been three years in the making and it has not

happened yet. Also, the people assigned the task of administrating these laws will admit they are buried in paperwork. This, however, is not to say they will not catch up with those who don't comply. They will.

Many golf course superintendents will be held accountable for their non-compliance. I would find it difficult to explain to my board of directors why the club was being fined for noncompliance with the EPCRA, when they spend large sums of money to keep me educated and abreast with golf turf management and the laws!

If what I have been told is true, that the best defense is a good offense, let us, as a group, get on the offensive. File the forms and pay the fees. Our image as golf course superintendents will only improve with our willingness to comply with the law.

All it will take is for one golf course to make headlines for failure to report to the proper agencies, and all golf courses will again be under the scrutiny of lawmakers and the public.

If I sound concerned, it is probably because I am. The public awareness of environmental and pesticide issues is approaching hysteria. Maybe, rightly so. However, we need to keep abreast of any and all changes in the law that affect us for this reason alone. We must be able to answer hysterical questions and finger-pointing accusations with a knowledgeable well coordinated answer, as well as, with a compliance of all the laws.

*Editor's Note: Starting with the next issue of "The Grass Roots", we are going to have a regular feature that deals with legal issues, sources of assistance in compliance and some record of what other golf courses in Wisconsin are doing with regard to these matters. Watch for it!*

ROY G. ZEHREN PH: (414) 242-5740

## NATURAL ATHLETIC TURF INC.

GOLF COURSE RENOVATION & NEW CONST.

*Specializing In*

Green & Tee Renovation & Rebuilding  
USGA & "Purr-Wick" Systems

"TERRA FLOW" & Regular Drainage Systems

Also: ASTROTURF CH-4 "DRAG MATS"

BY CONTRACT OR "T & M" BASIS

11040 N. Buntrock Ave. Mequon, WI 53092

### VERTI-DRAIN®

The Ultimate Solution For Compacted Soil

## Mechanical Soil Technology

— Contract Aeration Service —  
Serving The Entire Midwest

David Strang  
Ph. 309-342-2419

442 Pine St.  
Galesburg, IL 61401