



SLOW TO LEARN

By Monroe S. Miller

I still cannot believe we are going to have to return our DuPont benomyl products to distributors for yet ANOTHER contamination problem.

In fact, it is not just another product contamination mistake; it is the same one we've seen too often in our industry. How many more times will we see fungicide products contaminated with atrazine?

The latest episode is DuPont's second recall of benomyl products fouled with this all too familiar herbicide.

There was also the LESCO recall of a PCNB product tainted with atrazine. O.M. SCOTT had to recall FFII—also PCNB—for the same reason. A few years ago many golf course superintendents damaged golf turf while treating it with chloroneb contaminated with atrazine. There may have been more, but these are the ones that immediately come to my mind.

What in the world is going on here? Is anyone "minding the store"? Do the managers of these companies have any intelligence or experience at all?

Really, how hard is it to see the risks involved in using common manufacturing or formulation facilities for an herbicide and then a fungicide? It seems even more incredible since this isn't the first or second or even third time in our industry that this has happened.

Do we assume that these companies accept this kind of disaster as commonplace and merely build corrective costs into their pricing structure, rather than getting at the root cause of such irresponsibility? Is this yet another manifestation of incompetence in the U.S. business world? How many more times will this or similar situations happen before something is done?

Given all we've read in the past year about atrazine and the rules governing its use in Wisconsin and the fear many in the public have of it, the fact that it has been the culprit in this latest episode seems even more irresponsible. Somebody somewhere along the line in the management of these chemical companies is just plain stupid.

Can you imagine the job of having to face your green committee and give them the news that "because of an atrazine contamination problem our club's putting greens will be out of play for most of this year"?

Obviously, we aren't privy to what has happened to those responsible for the above incidents. But if they were handled in the usual American business way, the guilty were given a slap on the wrist, a pay raise and permission to continue putting you and me and our golf courses at risk.

That these problems are recurring isn't a surprise to me. They fit right in with poor cars, mediocre grass equipment, overpriced replacement parts and grossly inefficient government. I contend, however, that someday this will all have to change.

The slowness of these offenders to learn from past mistakes and disasters leads a customer to protest in the best way he can—withhold business and purchase from others who show some sense of responsibility.

Rather than being harsh, it is the wisest for both seller and consumer. We don't need any more public examples of incompetence, especially on the part of pesticide manufacturers and formulators.

The bead should be drawn on excellence and not on the proverbial foot. That would be an interesting change for some.

Water
treatment plant.

A golf course is a living, breathing water treatment system. It filters water, inhibits runoff and recharges groundwater. In fact, golf courses are increasingly used as disposal and treatment sites for unusable wastewater.

Who's in charge of keeping these amazing ecosystems in harmony with nature? Today's golf course superintendents. They're part troubleshooter, part business manager, part scientist and all environmentalist—dedicated to making our world a greener place.

WE KEEP GOLF GREEN.