



“Greener” Mowers?

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

“Going green” is one of the many buzzwords associated with environmentalism. In the golf industry it relates to doing our jobs with less input of water, chemicals and fuel. For us as managers of golf’s playing surfaces less input fits right in with the current economic challenges. The less inputs we use the less financial cost to our facilities. However we need to ensure the reduced inputs do not cause a loss of income from poor conditions or increased man-hours to do the same with less.

Aron Hogden, Golf Course Superintendent, University Ridge Golf Course in Madison, WI had an opportunity to try the latest technology in propane fueled mowers with a Ferris Industries, 61” zero-turn Belly Deck Mower. Ferris is a subsidiary of Briggs and Stratton and the mower is powered by an 895cc Briggs Vanguard Engine. I attended a media presentation on the unit August 26th.

Propane mowers have improved from early generation units that suffered from fuel line freezing problems during use in hot weather. New models use the heat from hydraulic fluid flowing through the hydraulic system to keep the vaporized propane technology from freezing up even on the hottest of days. Propane is in wide use with more than 600,000 forklifts and over 200,000 buses, taxis and other fleet vehicles across the United States using the clean burning fuel.

The benefits of propane use in turf are many starting with propane powered mowers producing 77 percent less smog producing emissions than gasoline engines making it the most widely used alternative to gasoline and diesel. In addition, over 90% of the propane used in the United States is produced from North America reducing our dependence on overseas oil supplies.

Mike Sheridan, Speaker of the Wisconsin Assembly was on hand to speak and test drive the mower. Speaker Sheridan who previously saw the benefits of propane powered forklifts during his time at General Motors Manufacturing expressed that cleaner fuels are better for the environment and the direction to go for the future. He was impressed with the benefit of reduced fuel spills especially in the turf industry where small tanks are constantly being filled or overfilled causing spills. The propane technology virtually eliminates spills with its closed loop system and stops contamination of fuel sources by dirt and grass clippings.

Most propane units carry two tanks so one is in use and the other is extra allowing for more hours per trip



Wisconsin Assembly Speaker Mike Sheridan gives propane power a try with guidance from Ferris Industries Jim Lawton.

onto the golf course without having to refuel. At the same time less gasoline means less gas theft or waste.

Steve Strombus with Madison Golf and current Vice President of the Golf Course Owners Association of Wisconsin stated, golf as an industry is not driven by regulation but by our own desire to help the environment and become more efficient.

The event was hosted by the Propane Education and Research Council (PERC) and Vice President Brian Feehan presented the benefits of reduced emissions, operating costs and dependence on foreign oil as the biggest benefits to using propane powered equipment. While the units themselves may cost 30% more upfront, many states do or will offer rebates for buyers and the propane mowers will offer a 30% savings in fuel as well as extended engine life due to the clean burning fuel. Over 2500 propane fueling stations exist so far in the US and with just in time delivery on tanks inventory costs are kept low also reducing theft possibilities.

If your golf course is in the market for a new rotary mower propane power is another option for you to consider helping your bottom line and effort to “go green”. For more information you can visit www.propanecouncil.org/mowers .🌱