

# Skin Cancer Threat Very Real For Golf Course Superintendents

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

The excitement of spring and the prospect of moving back outdoors for work is tempered for me somewhat these days. After I returned home from the GCSAA conference I had my three-month checkup with the dermatologist who has been caring for me of late.

I have reached the age where the news regarding skin cancer isn't good. And why would I expect it to be? My dad has suffered greatly from it for years, as did his father before him. Like me, they were involved in agricultural enterprises that kept them outdoors a lot of the time, usually unprotected from the sun. I was unprotected from the sun, as well, until recent years. I hope it wasn't too late to help, but I fear the worst.

It is not misplaced fear. For probably five years now I have had pre-cancerous and cancerous spots and ulcers on my skin removed. I say a prayer of thanks for my access to such

excellent health care. If I am diligent and conscientious, I feel I can stay healthy. There will be periods of misery and some unattractive healing, but that is a small price to pay. It has reached the point where I don't even mind the full body checks by the dermatologist, resident or PA. They are only helping ensure nothing is missed.

While we were at conference I visited with Mike Handrich and Oscar Peterson immediately after they went through the skin cancer screening booth. Oscar was clean, but Mike was alarmed. He had been told "get to see a specialist as soon as you get home." It was good advice; I have called him to make certain he has followed up.

Skin cancer is a risk many golf course superintendents run. I am predisposed because of a family history of the disease, our northern European heritage, and the fact that I have spent, literally, my whole life outdoors.

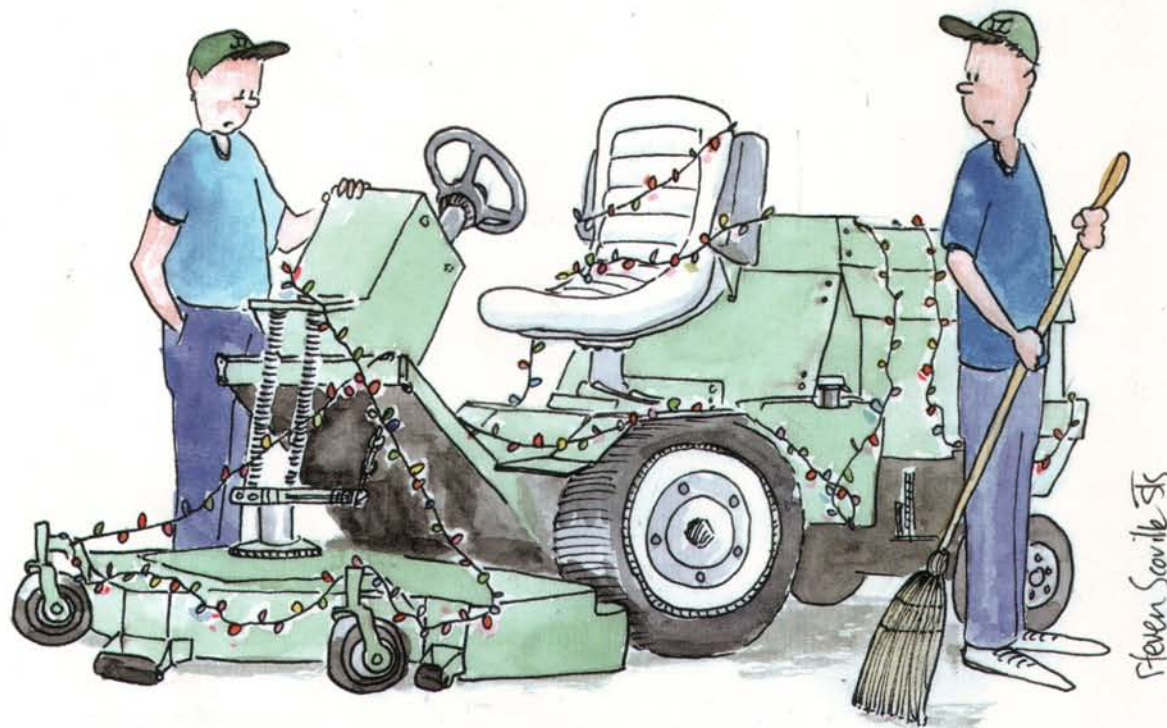
Below are some recommendations that can help all of us, but especially those just starting in the profession. Take them seriously; it could literally mean life or death. 🌿

## Prevention:

- Limit time in the sun, especially avoiding peak hours, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater.
- Avoid artificial tanning devices.
- Perform regular self-examination, including scalp, back of ears, neck and other hard-to-see areas; use a mirror or have a friend look at your back.
- Consult a physician if you see or feel anything suspicious.

## For more information:

Call the Skin Cancer Foundation at (800)754-6490 for free literature or go to [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org).



Steven Saville SKS

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