

SAFETY IS IMPORTANT WHEN HANDLING AND STORING PESTICIDES

Proper handling and storage of pesticides should be an integral part of any golf course superintendent's chemical use program. These substances, with their remarkable abilities to enhance the appearance and playability of a golf course also have the potential for considerable damage to you and your employees' health.

Improper handling of even small amounts of pesticides can cause blurred vision, headaches, nausea and chest constriction. Larger doses can deposit dangerous chemicals in the bloodstream, causing permanent damage to organs, especially the lungs and kidneys. Periodic blood tests should be run on workers who regularly come in contact with pesticides.

Establishing some clear and easily followed rules will protect you and your crew when handling potentially dangerous chemicals.

Read and reread the product label each time the pesticide is used. Manufacturers review and test their products often and may change label instructions. Wear protective clothing when handling pesticides. Long sleeves, rubber gloves, unvented goggles and a respirator are necessary. Never drink anything, eat, smoke, put your hands in your mouth or rub your eyes while handling chemicals. Avoid spraying on windy days and always stay upwind when spraying. Wash thoroughly with soap and water when you've completed a job.

Use good housekeeping practices, washing chemical spills off work areas and mixing equipment promptly. Even the smallest splash of pesticide on your skin should be washed off with soap and water immediately. Having a safety shower in the chemical mixing area for washing off larger spills gives added protection.

The proper storage and mixing facilities are a great aid to having a safe pesticide operation. A separate room or building for these functions is preferable, but under all circumstances you should have a lockable storage area and a mixing bench with running water. Pesticides should be segregated according to type to prevent cross-contamination and should be kept away from other supplies.

Containers for chemical storage should be clearly marked and periodically inspected for leaks or corrosion. Use original containers whenever possible. Under no circumstances should a pesticide be stored or mixed in a container that could be mistaken for a beverage or food container - a drinking water jug, for example.

Allowances should be made for the collection and proper disposal of runoff from the chemical preparation area. You should also develop a plan for containing water contaminated by fighting a fire in the chemical storage area.

Avoid the temptation to stockpile pesticides. Use up supplies on hand before you order more and don't accumulate odds and ends of old chemicals.

A safe operation is no less efficient than a careless one. In fact, careful handling of expensive compounds and strict adherence to use guidelines may reduce waste and save you money in the end.

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