

Private weather services keeping you

# Ahead of the Storm

By Amy Rolando-Oliver,  
Chief Meteorologist and CEO,  
Weather Watch, Inc., Minneapolis, MN  
Edited by Caroline Ruden

In the pre-dawn hours, dark clouds gather on the horizon. Remembering that the 10:00 o'clock news mentioned only a slight chance of rain later in the day, something must have changed. Should *you* change *your* plans for the day? Will you be able to apply chemicals today? Will the tournament have to be rescheduled?

As a golf course superintendent, you constantly face decisions that depend on Mother Nature. You need to say one step ahead of the weather. But how?

Planning your daily operations around the detailed forecasts of a private weather service can help your course operated more efficiently.

## Cost-saving/Life-saving

Private forecasting companies offer more detailed and frequent forecasts than any other source. These two advantages can save both money and lives.

For example, by knowing the exact hours when rain will fall, you can allow a natural watering in pre-emergents and grub control. It's a cost effective alternative to using the course's irrigation system. Labor costs can be saved by scheduling chemical sprays during the right weather, and also when scheduling crews for upcoming tournaments.

Accurate weather forecasts not only save money, they can save lives. More people are killed by lightning in the United States than any other natural hazard. Private weather services can help prevent such tragedies from happening on your course through advanced lightning tracking devices. And private weather services will warn you specifically when dangerous lightning is headed toward your course.

## What to Look for in a Private Weather Service

When shopping for a private weather service, be prepared with good questions to help you evaluate what service would be best for you. Questions like:

**1) How big is their forecasting region?**

Remember, the most accurate and detailed forecasts will come from a company that forecasts locally. If they forecast for the whole country, or around the world, they may spend only five or ten minutes preparing a forecast for your area.

**2) Do their meteorologists understand the needs of a golf course?**

You operate 7 days a week. Operations begin at dawn and club functions may last until midnight. Take



notes, and carefully evaluate how well they understand your needs.

**3) How technologically advanced is their forecasting equipment?**

Be aware that some radar pictures are 15 minutes old! You want instantaneous or "real-time" radar and lightning images, especially during severe weather.

**4) If I'm out on the course, how will I know if sudden severe weather is approaching my course?**

Look for a company with a pager system to reach you at all times, indoors and outside. Many services will fax you severe weather information, which may not reach you until it's too late if you aren't monitoring your fax machine.

**5) Will I be able to reach a meteorologist at all times?**

How easy is it to reach your meteorologist when needed? Seek a company that seems interested in serving you when *you* need them.

**6) Do they have a free trial period?**

A company that's interested in your needs won't mind giving you a week or two free trial to see if you like their service.

**7) What is the term of the contract?**

Most services have a 6-month or a 1-year minimum term. Ask if they offer a month-to-month term.

**8) How easy is it to sign up or cancel the service?**

You may have an upcoming tournament and want to get started right away. Make sure that a representative can come out to *your* course to meet with you and that there's not a lot of red tape.

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## Ahead of the Storm —

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### What Does it Cost?

Detailed and accurate forecasts can help your course become more efficient. Daily forecasts with updates tailored for your location range nationally from \$250 to \$425 a month.

### The Bottom Line

When you stop to consider the thousands of dollars that are spent daily in running your course, the cost for a private weather service isn't hard to justify. A private service is your best source for accurate and detailed weather information. After all, when severe weather is approaching, you can't really put a price on the safety of your crew and your golfers.



## Ray Hall —

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bike. In fact, this May he's scheduled to present a military wood carving to the commander of the 9th Field Artillery, his old army unit, at Fort Sill, Okla.

### Where Are They Now?

The accompanying story on Ray Hall, 76, is the first in a series of articles on retired golf course superintendents to be published in *Hole Notes*.

They will be published in the order they are received, following the mailing of a questionnaire.

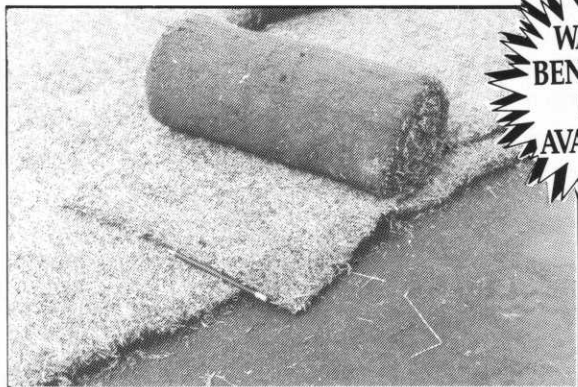
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