

Meeting The Challenge

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Here's What We Can Do to Proactively Advance Our Cause

Over the past six months, there have been a record number of critical media reports about golf courses and pesticide use. Paul Harvey, *The Wall Street Journal*, CBS Evening News and ESPN SportsCenter (in addition to dozens of local papers and TV stations) have all taken shots. Chances are good that this intense media focus will lessen as the golf season winds down. But, the real challenge still lies ahead.

It's a frustrating fact that those who oppose pesticides will use fear, emotion and pseudoscience in support of their agenda. On the other hand, we have research and truth on our side. The question is, how do we proactively advance our cause? What can you, as a professional, do to support the effort? What can GCSAA do to help you? Read on.

What You Can Do

The most important thing any superintendent can do is to know the facts and communicate them to golfers, media and decision-makers in your community. We've been very good at "preaching to the choir" for many years, but we must now make public relations a critical professional function. To be successful, every superintendent must participate in this "grass roots" campaign to build an influential constituency that supports us.

You can start by taking some simple but active steps to let others know about the environment benefits of golf courses, the safety of your practices, the testing and research required to register a pesticide product. Use club newsletters, bulletin boards and special events to spread the word. There is a world of information and a capable staff in Lawrence, Kansas, ready and willing to help you do this.

Invite local sportswriters, environmental leaders and other key figures out to tour the course (and play, if appropriate) and see your facility firsthand. Join the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. For just \$100, you can learn how to make your facility a better home for wildlife and help your players see the course as more than just a playing field. The benefits of the program are enormous.

Keep informed about the local, state and federal regulations that affect you. Every time a golf course is cited for a compliance problem or an OSHA violation, it hurts all golf courses. The fact that you're reading this information right now is proof you're already making an effort to keep up to date, but you can take an extra step by keeping in touch with your extension pesticide coordinator, chapter government relations liaison and local environmental officials. This "early warning system" can help you anticipate and better manage changes in regulations and laws that affect you.

Finally, bring others into the fold. One of the biggest con-

cerns shared by GCSAA members is that "the other guy" who doesn't have the education, interest or professional commitment will cause an incident that will reflect badly on the whole industry. The only way to solve this problem is to actively recruit non-members into your chapter and the national association. In short, every member must reach out to help those who could hurt us most. Nothing can contribute more to our eventual success than a unified, well-educated profession.

What GCSAA Can Do For You

Aside from representing the profession's interests at the federal level, the primary goal of GCSAA's government relations effort is to give you the tools and information you need to manage the regulatory and legal aspects of your job. The association has an amazing number of resources available to help you do this:

Greentips Fact Sheets: These one- and two-page summaries are designed to give you important basic information about the key issues that affect you. Current topics include:

- Facts About Golf And The Environment
- Grass Clippings Disposal
- Hazard Communication
- IPM
- Pesticide Storage Facilities
- Recycling
- UST and ABT Management
- Waste Disposal
- Water Conservation
- Water Protection

Position Papers: The GCSAA Board of Directors has issued position statements on key issues ranging from posting and notification to applicator licensing.

Pesticide Q&A: This new fact sheet is designed to help you answer the typical questions golfers might ask about your chemical management program.

Research Reports: Full text copies of key studies on health and environmental issues are available.

Videotapes: GCSAA's a/v library includes dozens of training tapes and informational programs (such as "Links With Nature") produced specially to help educate superintendents, staff members and golfers.

Staff Resources: The GCSAA Communications Department and Technical Information Services Department are ready to answer your specific question on virtually any topic. If we can't help, we can direct you to someone who can. Call us at 913/841-2240 to find out more about how your association can be a professional resource for you.

— GCSAA Briefing