

# 'Tis The Season

By Pat Jones

*"Spring has sprung,  
the grass has 'ris,'  
I wonder where  
the media is?"*

Pardon the poor poetry, but consider the point: April brings with it the traditional beginning of the golf season and the peak of interest in lawn care. If you haven't already noticed an upswing in media coverage of golf and lawn care chemical use, you certainly will this month. With the articles will come renewed attention and questions from golfers, local press and public officials.

'Tis the season for criticism of golf, golf courses and golf course management practices. How can you handle it? The best advice is to heed the words of Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts: "BE PREPARED."

**Be prepared** for hard questions from golfers about your chemical application policies. Be open and honest. Invite the questioner to visit your maintenance facility and see things firsthand. Consider voluntary posting. Use the information from the GCSAA fact sheet, "Questions and Answers About Golf Course Chemicals" for a brief article in your facility's newsletter or simply post the fact sheet on a bulletin board (call us at 913/832-4470 for a copy of the "Q&A").

**Be prepared** for questions about why your applicator is wearing a "moon suit." White Tyvek coveralls do look suspiciously like space suits, particularly combined with a full-face respirator. When golfers ask, let them know that you're simply following the label, which is the law, and use the analogy of an x-ray technician. Even though occasional



x-rays are completely safe for patients, the technician protects herself because she is repeatedly exposed. (You also might want to talk to your safety equipment vendor. Some manufacturers are now offering green-colored Tyvek suits that are less obtrusive.)

**Be prepared** for the articles that will surely appear in your area newspapers about pesticides and human health.

Respond appropriately and reasonably with a letter

describing your facility's IPM practices and safety record. Feel free to call us at GCSAA to give you guidance on the letter or to review your draft.

**Be prepared** for the possibility of an inspection by environmental regulators or occupational health officials. The most common violations are inadequate application records, poor storage and labeling practices and failure to have a written hazard communications program. Make sure that your springtime agenda includes attention to these critical compliance areas. (The most likely cause for an inspection is a complaint by a disgruntled former employee. If you terminate an employee, be very sure your facility is ready for an inspection.)

Finally, **be prepared** for the possibility of legislative initiatives that attempt to restrict chemical usage in your state. Activist groups are well-aware of the media attention that can be generated by introducing an anti-chemical bill in the spring. This is the most likely time of year for such bills to be introduced.

So, if you're preparing for a new season, don't forget to prepare for the scrutiny that might come with it.

—GCSAA Briefing, March/April 1995



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