

Do you have an emergency plan?

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Golf course managers all have a ticking bomb in their pesticide storage facility—both in a very real sense and a perceived, political sense. It is critical to have a well-planned, rehearsed emergency response plan in effect should there ever be a fire or other emergency that involves your stored pesticides. How you respond to a crisis may well determine the severity, cost, environmental damage, and degree of negative community response. In light of recent bad press (*Wall Street Journal*), it is important to prepare proactively before something happens.

Developed with an eye to any federal, state, and local regulations that may affect you, an emergency response (or "contingency") plan should address the following issues:

- appointment of an emergency coordinator—normally the golf course superintendent—and an alternate for the times when you are off-premises;
- a current listing of emergency response agencies—fire, police, EMS, poison control, hospital

utilities, chemical cleanup and containment specialists, attorney—with phone numbers and contact names;

- an inventory of average in-season and off-season quantities of stored pesticides and fertilizers with descriptions, trade and chemical names, manufacturers' names and addresses, and copies of the pesticide labels. This should be updated regularly with a copy stored off the premises;

- maps showing locations of both pesticide and fertilizer storage facilities, fire extinguishers and protective clothing, access routes, sources of water for fire-fighting—hydrants, irrigation ponds—drainage and runoff control features, and utility shutoffs. The map should have a scale of distance and a directional indicator;

- invite your local department to tour your facility at least annually, so they can use your maps to become familiar with the layout in a daylight, non-panic situation. Emergency response is always more controlled and effective when the response team knows what to look for and where to find it.

- periodic rehearsals. While we may scoff at the memory of grade school fire drills, there is no substitute for rehearsal. We tend, however, to forget, to put them off or to consider them silly. The easiest way to ensure that periodic drills take place is to ask your local fire department to schedule them for you. They won't forget.

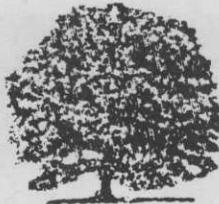
While thoroughness is important, be realistic in the development of your response plan. Keep it simple and direct. There is no sense having a pie-in-the-sky plan that has little chance of ever being orchestrated correctly in a panic.

An important element of your contingency plan is dealing with the media. If you think you have political problems with Jane and John Doe down the block complaining about your spraying, wait until you have a pesticide emergency that the media sinks its teeth into. Whether the emergency is real or not, the media can turn it into a catastrophe in a hurry.

During a media interview, be calm, confident, and honest. Help them get the correct facts. Do not speculate so that they won't seek less-informed sources elsewhere. Be brief and to the point, steering away from controversy. Once the pertinent topics have been covered, end the interview. Never say, "No comment."

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