

Your Shop's on Fire or My Definition of a Bad Hair Day

By Bill Neus

July 13, 1994 began with a phone call from the vice president of our company at 3:55 a.m. Now, several things were immediately apparent to me; he's not calling at this hour to say good morning, tell me what a great job I'm doing, or give me a raise. In not so many words, he told me that this morning I will be afforded a life experience that would allow me to meet new and interesting people, consume my every waking minute, challenge my skills, and test my sanity. Or, as he so bluntly put it, "You better get to work. Your shop's on fire."

As I was doing 80 mph down the beltway a State Policeman pulls up along side and screams at me through his bull horn to slow down, but he doesn't pull me over. Can't you hear that conversation, "honest officer, I really am going to a fire."

About one mile away from Hobbit's Glen, I could see flames over the trees against the dark sky. A million things race through my mind and then true panic sets in, the media is going to be there and I haven't even washed my hair yet.

It's easier for me to laugh about it now, but that day and for many months after, was a nightmare that wouldn't end. Insurance investigators swoop down, looking to hang somebody and treat you like a criminal. Insurance adjusters challenge every nut and bolt in your inventory assuming that, surely, you don't keep any parts in your parts room. So, what did I learn? That's easy, don't have a fire! But if you do, here are some things that might help you through. Borrow a camcorder and videotape everything in your shop with narration. Most of us have equip-

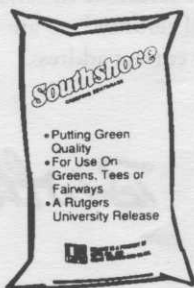
ment inventories, but good luck trying to figure out all the other stuff after the fact. The dollar figure of supplies and shop equipment is astronomical. The first two questions you'll hear when you arrive at the site will be, "where are the chemicals stored and we want your MSDS sheets now!" You better have them ready and they better be updated. Don't give away your master copy. Have someone make 10 full set copies of just your active inventory MSDS first. I had to give away 7 sets in three hours. Every official wants them and nobody shares. Keep a complete second set of critical records off site. God help you, if your only set of records go up in smoke. If you store pesticides in the shop, just wave good-bye, because they will let it burn. The reason is toxic smoke and runoff. Do yourself a favor and get a separate storage building.

In a disaster like this, we tend to focus on the material things. Don't forget the needs of your staff. They want to know if they still have a job, where to go, what to do. Get them together very quickly for reassurance and let them know your plan of attack. Be honest, tell them that you don't have all the answers and you'll need their help in finding solutions. Delegate as much as you can to as many staff members as possible. They truly want to help and will rise to the occasion.

Finally there's you. The next 6 to 8 months will be a study in frustration, red tape, endless paperwork, and many visits from your three new friends, Bud, Jack and Johnny. Don't despair, this too will come to an end. Along the way, there will be some bright spots, the most gratifying of which is the overwhelming support from the distributors and superintendents. Over time, the bad memories will fade, but all of those wonderful people who offered their help will stay with me forever.

Southshore Creeping Bentgrass

It's outperforming
some well-known
competition with its
dense, upright growth
and attractive color!



To learn more contact:



Lofts Seed Inc.
Bound Brook, NJ

(301) 595-1970
(800) 472-7701