

“Field Tip” – Let’s start training! Training makes all the difference.

By: **Boyd Montgomery, CSFM**
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Once you have all this information, what do you do with it? This is when your knowledge and expertise become evident. Break down the information, field by field, and prepare maintenance requirements for each field. This provides the building blocks for your training program.

For example, one of the requirements might be to maintain your soccer fields at the facility at a 1 1/2-in. cut with a reel mower. You set up your operators’ training for that facility to include reel mower operations and maintenance (daily, monthly, and yearly), safety issues, and also include cultural practice to maintain grass at 1 1/2-in. cut.

Another example would be if your staff is also responsible for cleaning the surrounding (non-field) facilities, areas such as restrooms, stands and trash. Your training program would then need to include training on infectious diseases, safety and health concerns, and hepatitis vaccinations along with the proper way to accomplish these tasks.

Who’s to blame?

Now that you have this information and have identified how your program should be set up for each facility, let’s start training.

Don’t be guilty of “throwing them to the sharks” - giving your staffs minimal instruction and turning them loose to learn from their mistakes. Your only hope is that their mistakes are minor, inexpensive problems. How many times will that be the case? I would wager not very often.

Who is to blame when this happens, the employee who makes the mistake or the supervisor who failed to train the employee? Can you honestly blame someone that has not been properly trained? No!

The blame falls on you and your training practices. Maybe when you hired your new staff member, your trainer was busy with another project and you were buried under a mountain of paperwork. Does that sound like an excuse for not properly training? No! The simple fact is that if you do not

take the time to train, you will spend more time than you can believe fixing the mistakes or a poorly trained crew member.

You’ve done the basics

What should be done? Keep going. You’ve already established the basis for your program by collecting and

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listing the schedules for each facility and staffing requirements. You've also, through your discussions with your supervisors and user groups, established expectations that you're required to meet.

Is your staff mostly full-time or seasonal? Or, perhaps, a mixture of

both? This will determine what type of training you can offer.

Also, do you know what motivates your staff members? The motivation for each one may be different. Is it money? Advancement? A sense of appreciation? Leadership? Part of your job is to motivate every staff member to attend and learn from the training experience.

Get them to contribute to the process and make your training even better.

For fulltime staffs, your training program may be fairly simple, perhaps two or three structured sessions a year to go over equipment safety and maintenance, personal and public safety, public image and staff development.

If you have a staff member that has been through the training session a couple times and his/her motivation is leadership, encourage this individual to run some of the training sessions.

For seasonal or mixed staffs, it is a bit harder. For one thing, some of you may start at different times during the season. Consider using one-on-one training, assigning experienced employees with newcomers. Monitor this closely. When your complete staff is in place, plan a staff-wide training session, too.

Foremost in any sports turf training program is safe and proper equipment operation. Don't allow staff members to run power equipment until they're trained to use it properly. This will motivate some workers who want to try out a new piece of equipment. Demonstrate equipment operations,

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Synthetic Turf Council Creates Certification Program

STMA

The Synthetic Turf Council (STC) announces a certification program that is designed to benefit users and providers of synthetic turf surfaces and systems. Officially called the Synthetic Turf Council Certification Program (STCCP), it is designed to identify companies who have voluntarily committed themselves to a higher standard.

To attain certified status, the company must adhere to the STC "Suggested Guidelines" document, delivering as declared in the job specification, agreeing to utilize the program resolution process, abide by the STC Code of Ethics, and promote the quality and innovative characteristics of synthetic turf. To become certified, companies also must meet the program's prequalification

experience requirements of satisfactory performance. Its performance record of continued customer satisfaction (or not) will be tracked on the STC website. The listing will continue on the website even in the event of decertification.

A large "C" logo will identify those companies that have voluntarily agreed to adhere to the program. The STC will begin awarding certification on Jan. 1, 2005.

The STC is the trade association for the synthetic turf industry and represents more than eighty percent of the volume of synthetic turf produced in North America. Members of the STC are landscape architects, professional engineers, designers, buildings, contractors, manufacturers, suppliers, testing laboratories, maintenance and other specialty services. ♦

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safety and maintenance.

Include some instruction on public image at each session. Crew members are in contact with the public on an almost daily basis. Set guidelines for uniforms and proper work apparel. Establish proper crisis notification and how to deal with questions from the public.

And, never, ever forget safety. You can't stress it enough. Cover all the bases - equipment safety, first aid and CPR training, public safety and occupational hazards. Invite outside experts to help you.

Keep on going

Staff training goes beyond giving your crew members a manual and asking them to read it. It should be an active, on-going process within your operation. As you strengthen your training program, you build efficiency and safety into your program as you instill a genuine spirit of teamwork and cooperation.

View staff training as money well spent, as an opportunity to build a better organization - not as a burden. ♦