

INSURANCE

Premiums to rise through 1988, says exec

There's not much relief in sight for insurance policy holders in the green industry and the general population.

As long as interest rates stay low, insurance rates will continue to rise, says James Leatzow, president of Leatzow Agency/Financial Guardian, an Oak Brook, Ill., insurance agency.

He predicts a 10 to 25 percent increase over the next two years. "I don't think (interest rates) are going to change until after the election," he told his audience at the recent Landscape Expo in Valley Forge, Pa.

Policy holders can expect their agents to pitch a theme of higher deductibles, he says, and one would be wise to accept the higher figure.

He notes several factors that have contributed to sky-rocketing rates: the insurance companies themselves who have been way behind in the development of computerized records ("they literally don't know how much

to charge," he says); the public's propensity to sue; lawyers (in the U.S., there's one lawyer for every 600 people, he says, and that number will increase to one for every 250 by 1990); and juries (juries tend to draw people who are satisfied with the \$25 per day you get to sit there, he says).

Juries, he says, have fallen into the "deep-pocket theory" where the injured party is entitled to recovery no matter who is at fault.

To avoid the lawsuit he suggest several points:

- 1) find an insurance broker who "speaks your language, communicates, and specializes;"
- 2) examine your own procedures and management (know exactly what is insured and what isn't);
- 3) document everything you do (with photos, for example);
- and 4) manage your loss control (losses do occur so try to minimize them).

When shopping for insurance, one



James Leatzow addresses the Landscape Expo in Valley Forge, Pa.

should learn about the industry; avoid choosing the low-baller; and call on the services of a third party (a consultant).



Exhibitors and attendees exchange pleasantries during the first Landscape Expo held in Valley Forge, Pa. Attendees roamed over 50,000 square feet of exhibit space during the three days.



Guests of HBJ Conventions and Expositions line up for food and drink during a special party held during the first Landscape Expo in Valley Forge, Pa. recently.

CONFERENCES

Landscape Expo hailed a success by its founder

The first Landscape Exposition, held March 5-7 in Valley Forge, Pa., is being hailed by its founder, HBJ Conventions and Expositions, as a success.

"We had more than 2,600 attendees," says Expo manager Dawn Pratt. "It was a good cross-section of quality buyers across the entire landscape industry" perusing the exhibits of chemical, equipment, seed and service companies.

"We've had a tremendous response. A lot of people were saying it was the best first-time show they'd ever exhibited at," says Pratt.

The few complaints were generated by the fact that the convention was held on two levels, and main-level exhibitors outdrew others.

Next year's Landscape Expo will be held at the O'Hare Exposition Center, Rosemont, Ill., March 3-5.

"It will be 1½ times this year's size in square footage," Pratt relates. "And we're going to expand our conference (educational) program."

TECHNOLOGY

Ex-fireman hopes to ignite the golf car industry

Fireman-turned-entrepreneur Tony Bonito mated your basic putt-around-the-course golf car with a Pac-Man machine.

And gave birth to what he says "is the most exciting thing to happen to golf cars in 20 years."

The product, the Pro Cart Computer, gives a graphic display of the layout (on a six-inch screen) of each hole of a given course. Sandtraps, trees, lakes, and greens are shown along with the hole's distance from each of its three tees. Flashing lights indicate the hole's 150-yard markers.

But that's not all, says Bonito, who just one year ago was fighting fires in south Florida and now heads a 40,000 sq. ft. computer manufacturing facility in Hollywood, Fla.

The Pro Cart Computer, with the addition of game cartridges, can be used to figure the scores of nassaus, scrambles, and other unique scoring



methods. A stop at a printing station spits out 9- and 18-hole totals.

Bonito claims his invention can help speed play with its 4½-hour "diminishing clock." And, if that isn't enough, the unit monitors the cart's batteries.

Says Bonito: "When a cart dies on the course, about a third of its power is forever lost. Since there are six batteries in a cart and each one costs about \$40, it is an extremely huge expense when a cart stalls out on the course."

Bonito claims the idea of comput-

erized score-keeping came to him five years ago after losing his pencil on a course. When he couldn't generate enough interest with golf car manufacturers, he decided to market the idea and resulting product himself.

"Most people don't realize the size of the golf car rental business," he points out. "Last year, it was \$1.7 billion in rentals. There are 750,000 cars in use."

Bonito's first units are expected to start turning up on golf courses this summer.

SURVEY

It's no surprise: money is No. 1 motivator

Money is the best way to keep employees happy in their jobs. A WEEDS TREES & TURF survey shows that wages, bonus pay, and paid vacation are the most popular ways to motivate workers.

The survey went to 300 grounds workers at golf courses, parks and sports complexes, schools, industrial areas and cemeteries. About 23 percent of those surveyed responded.

Of those, 17 percent say they have an established program for motivating employees, although only five percent have such a program for seasonal employees.

Wages, bonuses, and other monetary incentives are used by 33 percent of those responding. One employer said, "Recognition is vital, but it must be accompanied with cash or a substantial prize to avoid a hollow, cheap effect."

Bonus programs vary greatly. One employer gives his workers a bonus at the end of the year if the department comes in under budget expenses. Another offers each crew a certain percentage of the profits if there are no

WHAT BENEFITS DO YOU OFFER?	
Overtime pay	79%
Paid vacation	77%
Health insurance	68%
Life insurance	55%
Merit raises	53%
Training programs	47%
Bonuses	45%
Uniforms	44%
Company-paid job-related education	43%
Personal use of truck or equipment	40%
Time off in lieu of overtime pay	24%
Non-monetary awards	19%

complaints about the job.

Good benefit packages are also important. One lawn care company gives Saturday off with a set amount of production dollars. Most companies (77 percent) offer overtime pay and paid vacations.

Environment was rated second as a motivating factor. "A company must be a winner, a grower, to create more opportunities for employees, instill pride. A person's work has got to amount to more than pay," said one respondent. Another emphasized the importance of working with employees. "Sometimes it helps the Indians' attitude if the chiefs get down and dig a little dirt too."

Praise and good communication are also important in the employer/employee relationship. "If good work goes unnoticed, employees tend to feel it is not appreciated or necessary and slack off on the job next time," says one employer.

"Let the employee know where he stands and what opportunities are available for advancement...if he has no goals to strive for, he will be a ship without a rudder," says another.

Quality equipment also keeps workers interested in their job. "If equipment is broken down, the employee is on the defensive, whether a problem is his fault or not. In either case, he is unable to accomplish anything."

TURFGRASS

Thatch misunderstood, says MSU's Dr. Vargas

Most people need a lesson in thatch, a most misunderstood turf component, says turf guru Dr. Joe Vargas of Michigan State University.

"Thatch is a tightly intermingled layer of living and dead leaves, stems, and roots between the soil surface and green vegetation," he told the Nassau-Suffolk Landscape Gardeners Associ-

ation in February.

People should not think in terms of killing thatch, he said. Rather they should think in terms of "managing thatch."

Thatch is not all bad, he said. It reacts well to aeration and is resistant to compaction. However, it has poor moisture and nutrient retention capabilities.

He destroyed another myth: vertical mowing does not eliminate thatch.

"The only way to get rid of thatch is through coring," he said.

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ASSOCIATIONS

PGRs spotlighted at IVMA meeting

If you attended the recent Industrial Vegetation Management Association (IVMA) meeting in Kansas City, you got the impression that the members believe plant growth regulators (PGRs) have a major growth potential for the industry.

Members, mainly right-of-way contractors, were briefed on several of the PGRs now on the market including Short-Stop, Limit, Oust, and Embark.

Most said they are now using a PGR or will soon in the future.

In addition, members had the opportunity to peruse the latest in bare ground and aquatic herbicides, and spraying equipment. The insurance liability question was examined.

And finally, IVMA named its officers for 1987: president, Robert Cope, Weedcope, Omaha, Neb.; vice president, Paul Jaechs, JPD Weed Control, Broomfield, Colo.; and secretary-treasurer Larry Crane, Habco, Kansas City, Mo.

The 1987 meeting is tentatively scheduled for Dallas. For more information, write the IVMA, 1015 N. 122nd St., Omaha, NE 68154.

RESEARCH

Bouncing drops key to pesticide study

How many times will a spray droplet bounce before it sticks to a leaf?

"Up to six times," says USDA engineer Donald L. Reichard, who uses high-speed motion pictures to find the answer.

And what will make those droplets stick?

The answer could lead to more economical methods of making pesticides stick to leaves.

"Surfactants appear to be the most effective way of reducing rebound," Reichard tells WEEDS TREES & TURF.

Reichard and colleagues, using experimental equipment they developed, produce high-speed motion pictures that show large portions of droplets rebound as many as six times on the leaf surface.

"One of our major goals in protecting fruit trees from insects is to apply the least amount of pesticide needed to do the job to all sectors of a tree and nowhere else," says Ross D. Brazee, agricultural research engineer. "If we can do this then we can reduce the cost of pest control agents as well as the risk to the environment."