

## Athletic turf...revisited

Our September issue has generated tremendous feedback. You'll recall we devoted most of the issue toward addressing how an athletic field manager can make his field safer.

We're saddened by some of your replies. There's no doubt that most are trying to do an adequate job of maintaining your fields, but your responses tell us the job is next to impossible.



Howard Parker, manager of maintenance, grounds, and custodial services in the Newfane Central School system in Newfane, N.Y., poignantly writes:

"(We have) two men to mow four schools and related fields (over 100 acres), repair and maintain 13 vehicles and several mowers, deliver supplies, and maintain three playground areas, 13 ball fields, paint five fields once a week in the fall, paint the track once a week in the spring, and plow snow and refurbish equipment in the winter. It's no fun job."

Mr. Parker concludes: "There just is not enough time to even properly consider field maintenance. Planning programs without a real possibility of implementing them is hopeless (almost)."

That's just one example. We've received other letters and phone calls along those same lines.

There's no doubt that many school systems are in financial trouble; there's a choice between updated textbooks and adequate maintenance budgets. School levies are shot down with alarming frequency.

Yet some schools systems with money in the coffers are ignoring the conditions of their sports fields. Sadly, they review the conditions only when a serious injury (and lawsuit) occurs.

If administrators refuse to face up to horrendous conditions, they need to be educated. Here are some things you can do:

Be a pest. Keep on the backs of administration (within reason) until they are made aware of the issue of safe turf.

Be aggressive. Show off your good work, noting conditions before and after you labored.

Be efficient. Document your work, develop yearly budgets, keep tabs on equipment, and keep an eye to long-range plans.

Give administrators a copy of the September issue of WEEDS TREES & TURF to call attention to the problem of unsafe turf.

The next time your request for funds and/or equipment is denied, tell the moneymen that you don't want to wait until someone is seriously injured on your surface. That cost is much more than the price of fertilizer, herbicides, a mower, and an aerifier. Only when schools and parks realize this will we make the strides needed toward creating safe surfaces.

Ken Kuhajda, managing editor

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