

times on the club's south nine. There is rarely a shortage of "die-hards" for the extended service, he says.

Since 1981, club members have had the option to play the course throughout the winter when weather permits, although two other 18-hole courses are closed until the traditional season returns.

"It is not as cold as Americans might think," Witteveen says. (Toronto lies along the same latitude as Boston.) Witteveen adds that there are many mild winter days when a full round of golf is not only possible, but pleasant.

Witteveen keeps the tees, fairways and greens snow-free, occasionally by using snowblowers. Surface scalding damage from snowblowers is easily repaired in early spring. Beyond that, the course suffers no real damage from winter play, Witteveen says.

Tees and greens receive a heavy late-season sand topdressing which Witteveen credits as a good preventive practice. Dependable drainage also bolsters the hale

and hearty sand-based greens which make a smooth transition from winter to spring play. The greens are kept clear through the winter.

"Those greens seem to survive a lot better and are in better shape in the regular season than some of the other greens. That is an interesting by-product. We're always amazed at how beautifully the course comes out," says Witteveen.

Winter's charms do pose special challenges for golfers and superintendents alike; Witteveen responds with unique solutions.

- Four cups are pre-dug on each green in late fall. Three are plugged over with artificial turf plates until needed. This makes changing the hole placement easier when the ground is frozen. Winter cups are also located at the back of the green because approach shots in cold settings tend to bounce to that area.

- Wooden tees are not practical in winter because of the frozen ground, so Witteveen's crew fashions rubber tees from discarded irrigation piping. Colored balls

are used to stand out from the bordering white groundcover.

The short (three par-3s, six par-4s), challenging course can attract 75 to 100 golfers on a "balmy" winter day, and once played host to a 1984 tournament during a Canadian turfgrass convention. Low score that day was a respectable three-over 33.

Witteveen says holes-in-one have been recorded in December, January, February and March, and have all been dutifully reported to local newspapers.

Toronto's Board of Trade, the American equivalent of an American chamber of commerce, is likely the only one in Canada to own and operate a golf course, much less one offering tee times in November through February.

"This has not always made me popular with my colleagues in the area, who sometimes resent me for doing this. They feel it puts unfair pressure on them to do the same," says Witteveen, his voice trailing off in a low laugh.

—Jack Simonds

Mower safety reduces trips to hospital

Don't let any of your employees join the growing number of people injured while mowing a lawn.

- Last year, an estimated 77,000 persons visited hospital emergency rooms, suffering from lost fingers, toes and other extremities that were nicked, lacerated or amputated by power mowers. Thousands more were probably treated in doctors' offices for lesser injuries.

Statistics show that about 50 percent of the injuries from all mowers and 64 percent of the injuries to operators of walk-behind mowers occur from blade contact.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) established mower safety standards in 1982 to guide manufacturers in the production of safer equipment. However, there are things that you can do, as operators, to reduce injury potential.

The following suggestions come from "Divots," the newsletter of the Miami



Valley GCSA:

- Study your operator's manual to know the different functions of your mower.

- Make any adjustments to the mower before you begin to cut. And make sure the engine is not running.

- Remove all stones, wire and other objects from the area you plan to mow.

- Make sure children and other bystanders are away from the area you plan to mow.

- Never mow up and down a hill with a walk-behind mower. Always mow laterally to prevent slipping toward the mower.

- Never mow wet grass. It clogs up the deck and increases the chance of slipping.

- Wear sturdy leather or steel-toed shoes to protect your feet.

- When refueling, let the mower cool down first.

17 steps to course safety

- Knowing the 17 steps that you, as a golf course superintendent, can take to make your golf course safer for its players is a key to good management, said Al Zikorus at a recent Public Golf Course Management Association meeting.

There are also design considerations that can take into account player safety, Zikorus said, but maintenance suggestions he cited are:

1. Remove all dead wood in trees. Golfers don't stay out of woods on real windy days.

2. Protect all shelters with properly installed lighting rods.

3. Find and fill any potholes on the property.

4. Repair any eroded areas by grading, seeding or sodding.

5. Fill any settlement of drains after heavy rains.

6. Keep all stairs under repair. Eliminate them where possible and re-grade the slope.

7. Keep all signs serviced.

8. Keep ball washers serviced.

9. Use Turface or a similar product to

keep tees from becoming slippery.

10. Replace broken sprinkler head covers.

11. Protect pumphouses with fences and locks to keep children away.

12. Check brakes and locking devices for overnight storage of carts and equipment.

13. Remove all low hanging branches that could affect equipment operators and golf cart operators.

14. Use highly visible gates, not cables.

15. Remove rocks or cover from fairways and roughs that might ricochet a golf shot back to the golfer from across fairways.

16. Refrain from using railroad ties for sand trap facings.

17. Provide proper barriers in golf cart parking areas.



To minimize risk of injury to golfers, you should repair any eroded areas by grading, seeding or sodding.

Is your vehicle insurance a wreck?

Certain types of coverage are necessities—but that doesn't necessarily mean you should pay exorbitant premiums.

Basic vehicle liability coverages may be woefully inadequate to protect lawn maintenance operators in a serious mishap, according to Chester A. Pierce, benefits representative for the Lawn Maintenance Association in Florida.

Pierce's suggestions for making decisions on auto insurance, as listed in the organization's newsletter:

1) Set liability limits at a level high

enough to protect your assets.

2) Carry uninsured motorist coverage at the same levels as your liability policy.

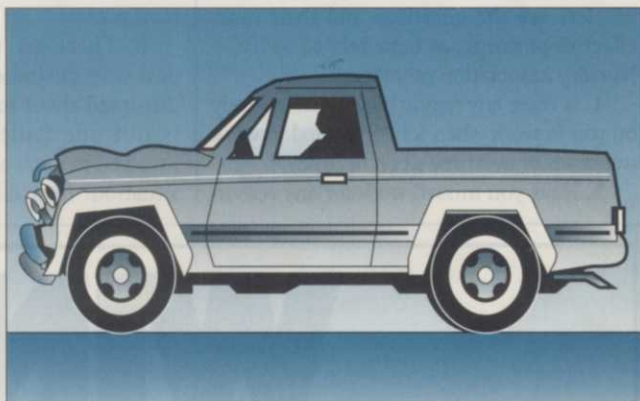
3) Buy personal injury protection which has no deductibles.

4) Consider higher deductible policies for collision coverage to keep premium payments down.

5) Carry comprehensive and collision coverage until the vehicle has little value.

Pierce also offers good preventive suggestions, including:

1) Use careful hiring practices, particu-



larly with those you expect will drive.

2) Hold safety sessions with employees.

3) Explain to drivers that premiums are directly affected by driving practices.

4) Set a good example yourself to employees.

Pierce recommends thorough review of all policies. Questions about coverage should be fully explained by your agent.

Defusing those volatile clients

There are specific steps you can take when faced with a difficult customer, according to a recent Garden Centers of America newsletter.

Defusing difficult situations:

● **SMILE:** Give the customer a warm, sincere hello with a smile.

● **ANTICIPATE:** Head off customer

complaints with a sincere, concerned comment. Take the offensive with kindness.

● **APOLOGIZE:** Take the blame for the customer's situation and empathize with them for their problem on behalf of your organization.

● **ACTION:** Solve the problems promptly.

Cooling irate customers:

● **LISTEN:** Let the customers know you are interested in their problems.

● **EMPATHIZE:** Put yourself in the customer's place. Use "warm fuzzies" that

are genuine, specific, timely and sincere.

● **QUESTION:** Ask questions in a mature, non-threatening manner that requires the customer to think about answers.

● **REPEAT:** Tell customers your understanding of the problem, then suggest one or more alternatives to answer their concerns.

● **APOLOGIZE:** But don't issue any blame.

● **SOLVE:** Identify solutions to satisfy the customer's needs or find someone who can.