

EQUIPMENT from page 18

equipment:

1) Your current supplier is not the same one who sold you the equipment years ago.

2) The supplier is offering you almost nothing on your trade-in equipment toward a new item. (Recovering the large amount of money you have in spare equipment is difficult, yet it is possible with some negotiating.)

3) To have it on hand for emergencies, in case a main workhorse breaks down. However, maintenance records of equipment failures over the last 10 years show that equipment is often out of service fewer than 30 days a year.

4) Many owners believe that keeping rainy-day equipment helps handle unexpected weather conditions. But rainy-day equipment needs often fail to materialize. If they do, employees often become more resourceful because no one likes to use the "old" equipment.

5) Some owners find spare equipment provides a buffer to handle unexpected opportunities for new business during a season. But, in reality, opportunities for new business occur an average of just once every three years.

6) An answer I continually hear—and it's not a good one—is that it simply is wrong to throw or sell equipment that you may need some day.

Equipment on the market today is more efficient, safer and superior in performance to models available just two or three years ago. With these many advantages in new equipment, why are owners keeping so much spare equipment around?

Indeed, there may not be a good reason to initially purchase new equipment:

- Much equipment is under-used. Operators get tired, or there is not enough daily work for the equipment.

- Because of technological improvements, many supervisors want to be among the first to own an innovative piece of equipment, even though mowing an acre in 25 minutes—as opposed to 30 minutes—results in little time or money savings.

- Great deals are being offered by some manufacturers, to get people who don't really need the new equipment to buy it.

Other factors—Insurance and technological factors are two reasons why you shouldn't be keeping so much old equipment on hand.

Worker's compensation premiums for equipment operators are increasing at rates of 10 to 50 percent. So safety in the workplace is becoming a more important

Spare equipment is not always stored properly, nor is it usually maintained, so it soon becomes useless.



issue in the green industry. Many old pieces of equipment don't have all the safety features of new equipment.

States are more active in identifying jobs that are higher risk, based on a review of claims made or pending. An employer could be held liable for allowing an employee to operate an unsafe piece of equipment (one on which no regular preventive maintenance is being performed).

The high level of employee turnover in this industry causes us to deal with new employees yearly—or even weekly. Accidents are more likely to occur with old equipment, or the resulting quality may not be as high.

Swap meet—One solution to the problem of too much old equipment was devised by members of the Ohio Lawn Care Association. They hold an equipment swap meet in the summer. This allows both members and others to purchase at a significant savings equipment that is not in active use. What a great solution: turning scrap into cash before you need to throw it away!

Finally, some of you might opt to sell off old equipment as early as possible, rather than having to pay a scrap dealer to haul it away in a year or two.

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Drug abuse: watch for symptoms

Employer-sponsored programs to help the afflicted can pay for themselves in no time at all.

■ The National Institute of Drug Abuse estimates that the current rate of drug abuse among employed persons is 8.2 percent. In the 18-25 age group, that figure rises to 24 percent. The Institute also estimates that 70 percent of current drug users are employed.

In a 1986 survey by the National Drug Abuse Help Line, 75 percent of drug users admitted using drugs while at work.

Signs of drug abuse include:

- lack of coordination,
- reduced motivation,
- lack of attention to detail,
- increased mistakes or accidents,
- wide mood swings,
- withdrawal from fellow employees,
- deteriorating personal appearance and health,
- a disregard for the safety of others, and
- an increase in domestic and financial problems.

Since drug testing programs typically cost between \$500 and \$750 to set up, they can pay for themselves in no time at all. The fee to a private consultant should include:

- 1) drafting a substance abuse policy to fit the needs of your individual company or organization,
- 2) conducting drug education sessions,
- 3) setting up local collection clinics, and
- 4) arranging for laboratory testing and reporting.

A drug test should cost no more than \$25 for non-drivers and \$35 for drivers. The collection clinic will typically charge between \$20 and \$25 for specimen collection. It should take no more than 24 hours to get test results for non-drivers and 48 hours for drivers.