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## CHECKLIST from page 18

- Have standard operating procedures been established for spills?
- Where needed for emergency use, are respirators stored in a convenient, clean and sanitary location?
- Are employees prohibited from eating in areas where hazardous chemicals are present?
- Is personal protective equipment provided, used and maintained?
- Are there standard operating procedures for the selection and use of respirators?
- Are employees instructed in the correct use of respirators, and are the respirators NIOSH-approved?
- Do you have a medical or biological monitoring system?
- Are you familiar with the Threshold Limit Values or Permissible Exposure Limits of airborne contaminants?

- Do employees complain about dizziness, headaches, nausea, irritation, or other factors of discomfort when using chemicals?
- Is there a dermatitis problem?
- Have you considered using an industrial hygienist or environmental health specialist to evaluate your operation?
- Is there a list of hazardous substances used in your workplace?
- Is there a written hazard communication program dealing with Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs), labeling and employee training?
- Is each hazardous substance container labeled with product identity and a hazard warning?
- Is there a MSDS readily available for each hazardous substance?
- Is there an employee training program for hazardous substances?

# Surviving crises in the workplace

by Ed Wandtke

■ Most of us are aware of the feelings and emotions we experience when being told a family member has died, or have received a call to go to a hospital because an injured friend is being rushed there.

When a crisis occurs, all other concerns come to a sudden halt.

With changing technology, a smarter workforce and more dependence on high technology, we have become dependent on technological innovations. The price for technological advancements may be an increased opportunity for a crisis.

Learning how to plan for, and deal with, crises often helps to simplify the crisis when it occurs. You, as an owner/manager, can take several steps to make crises easier to deal with:

**1) Plan for the unexpected.** You might deal with unexpected problems each day: a sudden weather change, a sick technician, a truck accident. All of these situations can cause a crisis, but if you have advance contingency plans, you will find these crises are only inconveniences. For example, having an extra truck available and an extra technician for the busy season is a good way to ensure that work gets done.

**2) Recognize emotion when it impacts you on the job.** We often pretend that emotions don't influence us in our business actions, especially in this male-dominated green industry. But when a crisis does occur at work, emotions really come into full view. Don't let these emotions take over and rule your actions.

Remember, you need to remain as objective and as understanding as possible.

**3) Recognize the supporting cast.** When the company successfully survives a crisis, sometimes the managers get most of the credit. But if your company is faced with hard times, your employees are the ones who often pick up the slack and pull it through. Giving your employees the recognition they deserve is a sign of a company that knows the true value of an employee.

**4) Handle change with flexible employees.** It is amazing how well we can deal with change. When weather influ-

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## Employees can be a source of strength when the company goes through an unfortunate and/or unexpected turn of events.

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ences a planned activity on a given day, we are forced to change the schedule. Most companies have learned to deal with change, and many owners even put extra stress on their companies when they change their minds from morning to evening. Make sure, as owner, that you strive to be consistent. Employees are asked to deal with enough change, so owners should be the stability they can count on.

**5) Don't create your own crises.** One aspect of most businesses is the need for

secrets and confidential information. "Who knows what" is often a very disconcerting situation among employees. If someone is being fired and someone else finds out in advance, distrust is provoked. Employees like to know where they stand in order to feel in control of their own destinies.

**6) Keep your goals in aim.** Often, a crisis will cause many employees to suddenly rush to solve a new and unusual problem. Who then takes command to refocus the employees back on goals? In many companies I have seen too much time wasted on activities that will not increase profitability or goal achievement. Many companies, however, have found that using an industry-experienced consultant to be effective. The tips and suggestions you receive from such an individual can help you dispose of useless activities and help keep you and your employees focused.

Crisis, though infrequent, can be a real trial. Learning how to deal with a crisis, having an individual ready to back up your positions, and knowing when to seek outside help can make crisis resolution easier.

Remember, crises usually happen when you think you have every base covered. Advance planning and knowing where to get assistance will help your make it through whatever might arise and make your company more resilient.

—Ed Wandtke is a principle in Wandtke & Associates, 2586 Oakstone Dr., Columbus, OH 43231. For further information about the items covered in this article, phone (614) 891-3111.



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# Chipper/shredder safety precautions

**'It can't happen to me,' you say? Chipper/shredder accidents do happen to landscape and tree care specialists who don't follow these rules.**

by James E. Guyette

■ Chippers and shredders come in a number of sizes and configurations, ranging from homeowner models to commercial pull-behinds, but one factor is constant: the need for the ultimate in safety precautions.

Larger chippers made for tree branch disposal can be especially dangerous to careless operators or others in the immediate area.

Most chipper accidents are caused by operator negligence or error, not because of the machine's design. They happen to experienced, confident operators who have a lapse in paying attention to what they're doing—perhaps caught up in the belief that "it can't happen to me."

Actual chipper injury figures are not available, but the risks are real.

Aside from the obvious mayhem of coming into contact with high-speed rotating blades, an operator can be stuck by a stick knocked askew from the hopper. Or an operator working along a roadside can be run over by a passing vehicle. And the chips coming from the chute have enough force to peel the paint off a house.

Industry sources say that more than half of all chipper injuries are suffered during maintenance procedures.

Always let the moving parts come to a full stop and then remove the ignition key before beginning any maintenance, says John Such, field sales representative for Lanphear Supply in South Euclid, Ohio. He stresses that operators should read all the manuals and be thoroughly trained before working on these machines.

**Safety tips**—Wearing the proper attire is crucial. Loose clothes or too-tight gloves (always avoid the gauntlet-type) can catch on brush going into the blades. A hard hat and eye and ear protection is mandatory. And the noise level means that an operator has to take special note visually of sur-

rounding people and activities.

When setting up, make sure you're not parked under the tree being worked on. (People have actually done this.) Block the wheels, taking care to keep your feet out from under the tongue mechanism. Many accidents happen during the hooking and unhooking process.

Before hauling, the safety chains should be crossed under the trailer tongue and securely fastened so the chipper will not fall to the ground should there be a hitch failure.

Check the chute discharge direction, and don't stand in front of it.

Look in the hopper before starting. This prevents shovels, water coolers or whatever from being fed into the blades.

When feeding, never let your hands cross the plane of the hopper, and *never* use a hand, foot or rake to push items in. Don't force items in, and avoid feeding metal, glass, stones and any other foreign matter. Be certain that a climbing rope isn't still entangled in a branch.

**Smooth running**—Certain periodic,

Such:  
PTO can  
'turn  
blue and  
fry.'



weekly and daily inspections and maintenance tasks are necessary for equipment upkeep and safety.

For example, on engines with external governors, Such says that a frequent belt inspection is absolutely required. If there's the slightest question about that belt, replace it immediately.

"If the governor belt breaks, the machine will run out of control," Such warns.

The knives should be checked daily for sharpness, and they should all be the same length. The chipper belts require daily inspection, as do the fluid levels, air cleaner, lights, hitch and pintel ring. Make sure there's no dirt on the radiator. If there is,



**Hard hats, goggles and gloves are required safety gear for chipper/shredder operators.**



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the machine can overheat.

When checking belts, make sure you don't over-tighten them. This can cause bearing, pump and/or PTO failure. The PTO/clutch should be checked daily. It should take about 90 ft./lbs. of force to engage the clutch handle.

**Don't turn blue**—The major cause of PTO failure is "facing burn-out" from either incorrect use, incorrect adjustment or a combination. "It will turn blue and you'll fry it," says Such, who recently conducted a seminar on chipper use for the Ohio Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture.

The engagement time for the PTO and the adjustments must meet the manufacturer's specs to avoid costly breakdowns.

Lubricate the bearing properly. One manufacturer reports that 95 percent of all bearing failures are caused by improper lubrication. Another big cause of bearing failure is operating when the grease is cold. This will ruin the shaft along with the bearing. Such says that it is absolutely crucial that the correct specified warm-up and idle periods be followed. Heed the manufacturer's specs and don't try for short cuts.

## Do/don't

### DO:

- ✓ Understand safety, maintenance materials
- ✓ Wear head, eye, hearing protection
- ✓ Be extra observant
- ✓ Set up far from road
- ✓ Use cones, signs and a flagger
- ✓ Feed from the right side or rear of hopper
- ✓ Check discharge chute direction
- ✓ Look in the hopper first
- ✓ Look for climbing ropes in branches
- ✓ Check governor belt often
- ✓ Specified daily, weekly, periodic inspections
- ✓ Keep radiator clean
- ✓ Check PTO
- ✓ Follow PTO specs
- ✓ Follow specified warm-up period
- ✓ Lubricate bearings correctly

### DON'T:

- ✓ Wear clothes that are too loose
- ✓ Wear gloves that are too tight
- ✓ Set up under targeted tree
- ✓ Run toward road
- ✓ Let branches flip into road
- ✓ Stand in front of discharge chute
- ✓ Set non-brush items in hopper
- ✓ Let hands cross hopper plane
- ✓ Use hand, foot, rake, etc. to push brush in
- ✓ Force anything in
- ✓ Push in foreign items
- ✓ Use dull knives
- ✓ Ignore any part of the machine
- ✓ Over-tighten belts
- ✓ Try any short cuts

When an inspection timetable is presented, it's there for good reason. It does no harm to check each part—be it bolt, screw, filter, fluid—as often as possible.

"Common sense, reading all safety instructions and a good maintenance

program are the keys to chipper safety and a trouble-free chipper," says Such.

—James E. Guyette is a freelance writer specializing in the green industry. He is based in South Euclid, Ohio.

## Questions to ask before spraying

■ Dr. Stephen Pearson, technical services manager at Spraying Systems Co., Wheaton, Ill., encourages pesticide and fertilizer applicators to consider drift potential before spraying. Here are five questions you should ask yourself:

1) Are there sensitive plants nearby? Allot extra buffer zones on the border of the application zone.

2) What size spray tip is being used? Larger, heavier droplets from larger nozzles or special drift control spray tips minimize drift.

3) From what height is the product being applied? Higher booms mean droplets have more time to drift before hitting the target.

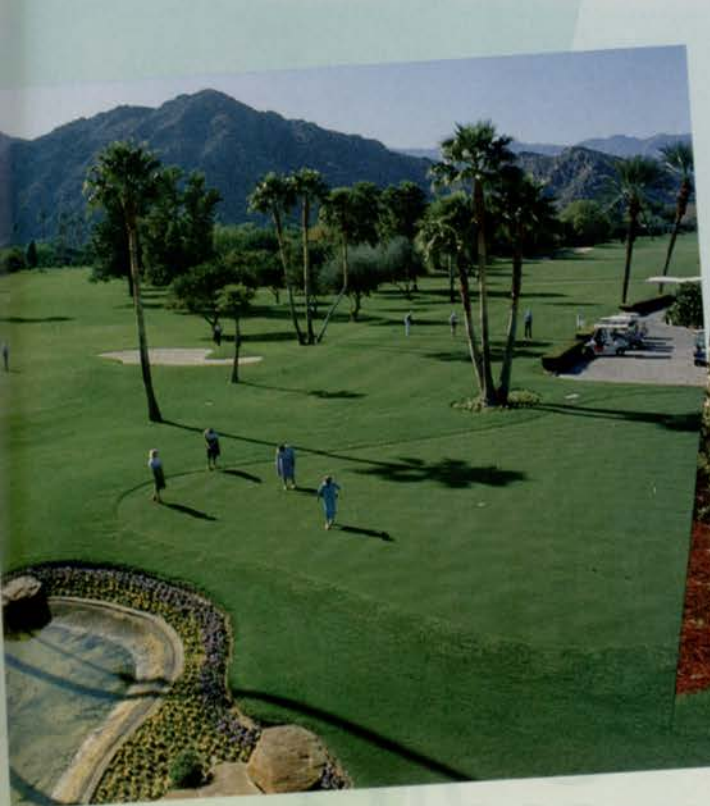
4) What is the wind velocity? Even a slight breeze of 6 mph can cause measurable drift.

5) What is the spray pressure? If an applicator reduced the pressure, drift is reduced through increased droplet size. But remember, decreasing the spray pressure too much can affect spray pattern and volume. Always re-calibrate sprayers after a significant change in pressure.





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# Dealing with expectations of athletic field quality

**The groundskeeper must listen to views from many sources and focus on the issues, not the emotions.**

by Jesse Cuevas

■ Everyone involved with an athletic field wants a major league field on a minor league budget.

The number one concern—first, last and always—is a safe facility. The second concern is fairness. If the field is instrumental in a win-or-lose situation, the groundskeeper hasn't done his job.

Initial fund-raising for field renovation often is driven by the project's excitement and the expectations of the entire community, school system or professional sports organization.

But getting a yearly financial commitment for proper field maintenance is a

tougher proposition. The "money people" will need to be convinced from the beginning that field care is an ongoing need.

Projected annual maintenance budgets should be brought to the table when field renovation is first discussed. Costs should be broken out into categories for equipment, parts and repair, fertilizer, seed and chemicals, irrigation, other supplies, and labor. The groundskeeper must have the courage to present this case, fully detailed and documented.

**Then, teamwork**—Once a decision to repair a field is made, designate a person to take the steps necessary to keep it up. Whoever holds this position will be an integral part of the team, and should be treated as such. That bond should be encouraged and reinforced—even at facilities where the pay scale is low. Little things, like a team hat and jacket, can symbolize the team concept.

Field maintenance expectations start at the top. It's vital that the administration or athletic department provide positive support. The head coach and field maintenance supervisor must have a mutual respect. The players will take their cue from the coach.

Top level personnel, removed from the day-to-day activity of field maintenance, are reactive to pressures from their superiors and funding entities. These people mostly want answers.

Toward these people, the groundskeeper must listen to the views expressed and focus on the issues, not the emotions. Most coaches and players have good-sized egos. If the game is going well, it's largely due to their ability. If the game is going poorly, there must be other con-

tributing factors—and the field is a likely candidate.

It's here that the groundskeeper must be thick-skinned. Only about two percent of the comments he gets on the field will be compliments. The groundskeeper must be able to listen to complaints without acting defensive. Let the complainer express his or her concern—vent some anger if necessary—and then allow a cooling off period.

An investigation comes next. If something is wrong, the groundskeeper must take responsibility to get it fixed. If the field is in proper condition, the complaint can be chalked up to the emotions of the game.

Players' parents can be the groundskeeper's biggest help, or greatest detriment. Some might want to help (see list). Those who only want to criticize can wreck team morale. Some of the best volunteers are found in the smaller towns where the ballfield is their pride and joy. These people are hungry for advice and more than willing to follow the maintenance program laid out for them.

**Dollars and sense**—Dollars will always be an issue. Only so many dollars are available, and that money has to be stretched to cover total field needs. To do that, turf maintenance knowledge is essential.

If the groundskeeper doesn't have formal training in field management, there

*continued on page 34*

