



Better Turf for Better Golf

TURF MANAGEMENT

from the USGA Green Section

Planning for Safety in Golf Course Work

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When I was first asked to present this paper I had no idea of the ramifications that safety could imply and justify. It has captured my interest to such an extent that now I am scared. Needless to say, it has been informative, rewarding, and I have gained a life long lesson.

My Green Committee Chairman, Mr. Schwarze, is with the Labor Relation Department of General Motors. When I inquired if General Motors published some helpful safety literature he introduced me to G. M. Safety Director, Ken Hedges. Mr. Hedges listened, dug into his files, displayed material, and then phoned Mr. Art Kelly of the National Safety Council in Chicago. Between the two of them I have been deluged with enough material to save the whole human race for the next several centuries. I am indebted to them for their cooperative concern and graciousness.

Safety, practically defined, is "the use of techniques and designs to reduce, control, or eliminate accidents." Safety's history goes back to Biblical times. Moses commanded that battlements on houses should have rails so that no one would fall off and the householder be guilty of shedding someone's blood.

Allow me to approach this matter of safety in two ways—the theory of safety and the practice of safety. Then we will draw a few conclusions. Our premise is if the practice of safety is important, then the theory of safety is essential.

We now base our thesis on the fact that safety is and must be a state of mind. Thinking in terms of safety is a better way to work, to play, to live. Safety skills help form desirable habits. Safety is profitable. We find that safety creates an efficiency beyond the state of mind. The elemental competitive spirit of meeting a challenge is a tremendous hidden factor. In other words, a good man wants to improve; if thinking in terms of safety assists he will adopt safe principles to do a better job and to better himself.

A golf course worker must be taught to work the safe way. It helps his mental attitude. Someone cares for him. It is nature's oldest rule. Safety should have the fervor of a religion; it is a faith in a true sense. Science has progressed in every field; let us make use of it in our accident prevention thinking.

Among the grave responsibilities that rest with the country clubs and the superintendents is the providing of safety

conditions and safety equipment, plus the inculcation of a positive and consistent approach to the realization and appreciation of the real meaning of safety education and its application. While engineering safe conditions is important, it is more important to make every golf course employee want to work safely.

We can perceive that the work of safety engineering needs to be supplemented by safety psychology. The course worker must be educated in safety-mindedness. Sometimes for their own protection the workmen must be shocked, shamed, threatened, and frightened. Safety work demands zealous, persistent attention. Every appeal should be made. The appeals should vary and not be monotonous.

Further, the study of safety is designed to inform persons of the many hazards they meet, to help them evaluate the "calculated risks," to make the individual golf course worker more skillful in overcoming hazards, to develop his thoughtfulness, and to teach him to consider the probable results of his action as related to himself and others. He must know that the avoidance of accidents is more likely to result from knowledge and attitudes of thoughtfulness and thinking than it is from mere chance. Certainly one must know the dangers to avoid them.

Accidents Are Expensive

We can draw this conclusion: that safety and accident prevention is one of the most important tasks of the superintendent. (This is a silent attest to his safety efficiency, judged by the few accidents on golf courses.) Accidents are expensive; golf course maintenance may be slowed down or stopped completely. Valuable workers may be temporarily or permanently lost. The accident may result in a neglected golf course or even the country club's loss of community good will. Even more important than the loss to the club is the effect on the worker and his family. No greenkeeper's family can afford long periods of no or limited income, even though they may be covered by insurance. Therefore, from this standpoint alone the superintendent and the club must make certain that every operation is carried on as safely as possible. Safety equipment required for the job must be adequate, it must be

in good working order, and it must be in constant use by the golf course worker.

I am a firm believer that personal problems effect your personnel. An anxious, fearful, worried employee is likely to become inefficient, dissatisfied, and ripe for an accident. In the "Handbook for Supervisors" by Ecker et al, it is claimed that morale or attitude of a worker towards his job is a significant element in production and safety. He is a hazard not only to himself but also his co-workers if his attitude is negative. It is obvious, they claim, that a worker with generally good morale will: (1) believe that he has a good job, that he is recognized, and that his co-workers are skillful and safety conscious and that his club is one of the best; (2) likes his job, those with whom he works, and the club; (3) tend to work efficiently, safely, and to the maximum of his ability, cooperate fully with his fellow workmen and do all he can for the good of his club. Conversely, a worker with poor morale will believe, feel, and do the opposite of each of the above.

Pursuing the theory that safety is a state of mind, these two fundamental principles are of consequence: (1) That constructive suggestions and positive directions are of more value than a list of "don'ts." (2) That emphasis should be

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Auburn, Ala.

September 12-13-14

Florida Turfgrass Conference
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September 14-15

Midwest Field Days
Purdue University
Lafayette, Indiana

September 27-28-29

Northwest Turf Association Conference
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington

placed upon the promotion of safety and the prevention of accidents, as a means of insuring greater usefulness and happiness in life rather than fear of injury. Safety education should develop courage with prudence as distinguished from foolhardiness.

A Good Safety Record

Before we proceed to the practice of safety I think it is appropriate to appraise and to praise the superintendents and their safety records. It would be interesting to secure data of accidents on golf courses. I cannot recall a single fatality, except from overwork, of course! There must be an unconscious safety endeavor on the part of the superintendent. He loves his work, he is a wise practical character with an extremely sensitive conscience. He is a God-fearing man who is his 'brother's keeper.' The superintendent is keenly aware of the safety and welfare of his crew. Golf courses can consider themselves fortunate that there have not been many fatal or serious injuries. And as you know, the miracle is not that there have been so few but that there have not been more!

As you have intelligently surmised, the superintendent is the key man in safety on the golf course. He must clearly understand so that he can be clearly understood. There must be a contract of understanding between worker and superintendent. Incidentally, this is true in all other operations. Thus, principles of safety advises us in areas other than accident prevention.

Know the Dangers

There are many hazards in golf course work, but as in any well-regulated business these hazards have been carefully analyzed and safety rules and practices have been established. It becomes the superintendent's responsibility to instruct the groundsmen to become familiar with the dangers of golf course maintenance, to understand and appreciate the adopted safety regulations, to use the safety devices provided, and to develop a sharp awareness of the importance of the safety measures. As we said, our work is not without some hazards but the intelligent and instructed worker can do his work with a high degree of safety under most conditions if he calculates the

risks and takes the proper precautions to meet them.

Now I would like to recognize some of the specific hazards in this esoteric occupation of maintaining grounds for the refined shinny player. This will be an informal listing with no special order. If I relate what we do at Meadowbrook it is because, as in all talks of this type, it is necessary to resort to personal experiences. Our workmen are taught to watch out for themselves and for other crewmen. We ask that they keep track of each other at all times on the course. Since they are in danger of flying golf balls the men wear white pith helmets and uniforms. The factor of being seen and protected justifies this cost.

Heat can cause prostration, sunburn, excessive perspiration, etc. Sedatives, restoratives, creams, ointments—preventative and curative—insect repellants in various forms, are all part of each man's first aid kit.

Cold causes frost bites, exposure, etc. We furnish suits of thermal underwear, boots, gloves, uniforms, and coveralls. (These are actually cheap fringe benefits. They more than pay for themselves in increased work output.)

Rain and lightning: The USGA has done a fine presentation on this. Our men are instructed to go out in their cars to bring in stranded members and caddies.

Driving: On the course, club property, etc., the people—golfers and children—are hazards. We have speed limits. On our tractors and other mobile equipment are mounted multiview mirrors, similar to the type used on busses. Brakes are constantly checked; parking or stopping on steep hills is forbidden. Keys are never left in equipment. Mounting and unmounting can be hazardous; men are taught the correct method. We request all employees to walk around a piece of equipment before it is mounted.

Mowers: These are the treacherous villains. And they should be treated as such. One person only adjusts the reel at a time. Leather gloves are worn when adjusting in the shear area. It is interesting to note that there are twice as many finger amputations for the age group under 18 years than all others. One can readily see why some states will not allow youths under 18 to work with power

equipment. A skilled, experienced man handles this for us. Let's put it this way: we place the coolest man on the hottest job. We have one rotary—the man who uses it has protective safety shoes. Common sense safety practices are in effect when work is done in any way, any place, any time, with mowers. The danger of burn, hand, finger, or foot injury, multiplies when in the mower area; therefore, precautions and safety practices should multiply in ratio.

Electricity: Know where the live wires come into the buildings and on to the course. Alert your crew on switch operation. Motors should be as automatic as possible. Have warning signs, paint danger areas, lock buildings or fence.

Chemicals are big bad wolves. In general, instruct your crew to treat all chemicals with utmost respect. Again, we furnish rubber gloves, aprons, boots, face masks, goggles, and protective creams. If it is not too windy, we want chemicals mixed outside for good ventilation. We have built a platform so that workmen can put chemicals down into a tank rather than hold it up overhead. This avoids spilling into the eyes, face, and body. Plastic containers and measuring cups are safer, we find. May I suggest to the manufacturers that chemicals be marked in a better manner, including dangers and precautions involved and the antidotes prescribed. At my suggestion some manufacturers prepared their chemicals in soluble glutinous bags—no handling, no measuring—so that we just throw them in. There is much room for improvement. Superintendents should warn the workers against skin contact, eyes, breathing, and swallowing. Smoking should not be permitted. Chemicals should never be stored near seed or fertilizers; they can sterilize and contaminate. They should be stored separately with containers tightly secured and under lock and key.

Material handling: Avoid storing heavy objects overhead. They can fall down, and they can cause strain. One author on safety warns us, "Lifting, carrying, lowering objects, are among the most dangerous jobs in industry. Strains, sprains, bruises and cuts result from this type of activity. Handling loads that are too

heavy, using the back muscles instead of the leg muscles, not having a proper grip on an object, not using proper tools for lifting, not having a firm footing, or jerking or twisting the body rate among the chief causes of injury."

Digging and tree trimming: These activities require constant alertness and good equipment such as sharp saws, clippers, ladders, picks, and axes with tight handles. We hire professional tree trimmers. They have insurance, recognize their own hazards and in the long run are cheaper. We do some trimming from the bucket of our tractor front loader.

Shop: The common sense rules of safety that prevail in industry and good garage operations pertain here. "Good housekeeping" means clean buildings, floors free from obstacles over which one can fall, floors clean of oil and grease, rags, rubbish, and other hazards. Proper lighting and ventilation, especially for spray painting, is essential. In research for this paper I read with interest that touching any part of a broken fluorescent light is dangerous because of the inside coating which retards healing and can cause complications. Proper and sharp tools, guards, double jacks, etc., are a safety must. We have our employees take turns cleaning up the shop—in this way all are acquainted with the handling of tools, where they belong, and they personally partake in the hazard prevention program.

Fire: It is a good idea to mark your calendar on the date the extinguisher should be checked. This month's *GOOD HOUSEKEEPING* magazine has an article on fire extinguishers. These three points scare me: (1) Your fire extinguisher may be useless when needed; (2) They may spread the fire if used incorrectly; (3) Some can produce dangerous gasses. So be sure of yours; have you checked them recently?

Perhaps you may gain something from these practices. Every piece of equipment for each man has a first aid kit and fire extinguisher for any emergency. We have saved three electric carts that got too hot.

Around our ponds we place life savers and ropes; although players and children should not be there, they are!

Signs are placed at No. 1 and No. 10 tees notifying members that greens have been sprayed and warning them not to place ball to mouth; also to clean shoes before entering locker room. We also alert locker room attendants.

In a twofold effort to teach and practice safety, we have our men constantly seek out hazards on the course. This may surprise you, but some of our best ideas are tapped from this source. Ramps for electric carts from steep tees suggested by an employee eliminated the roller coaster atmosphere and also the dangers.

There are many, many more instances on a golf course where hazards exist and where safety practices could apply. The few that we have touched upon should create at a golf club an awareness that perhaps the safety aspects have been neglected. If this paper will rouse us from complacency to comprehension, then it has served its purpose.

Recommendations

Now I have a few recommendations that you can mull around in your heads:

1. That a committee be appointed that could further study and explore the potential of safety factors regarding golf course operations.
2. That the USGA and the G.C.S.A. along with the manufacturers supply golf courses with safety measures and precautions regarding use of equipment, mowers, chemicals, electricity, tools, etc. Perhaps some safety materials, posters, signs, etc. could come from this cooperative venture.
3. Establish within the USGA and the Green Section, a safety committee. Its duties would be to record, publish bulletins, and distribute data to member clubs. Bulletins should be similar to this copy from General Motors. It contains:
 - a. Accident—circumstances, etc.
 - b. Injury—type, detail, etc.
 - c. Cause
 - d. Correction, avoidance of re-occurrence
 - e. Recommendation

This could result in promoting safety

on a national scale. It could be an enhancement for new USGA members.

4. Initiate overtures to the National Safety Council, exploring their facilities, utilizing their experience, and requesting recommendations.
5. Set up schools on safety or push for the inclusion of this topic at the various conferences. Doctors, first aid teachers, safety engineers, would be welcomed speakers. This way, the superintendents could relay this knowledge to golf course employees.
6. That if the associations do not immediately adopt these recommendations I suggest the individual clubs start their own programs on safety.

I kept this quotation from Harold H. Burton, Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court until the last. I feel it summarizes our thoughts quite well:

“As a prevention of disease is better than its cure, and prevention of war better than victory, so prevention of accidents is better than to attempt compensation for them . . . Teaching the world to be careful is a constructive service worthy of God’s great gift of life to Man.”

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