

DRY-CLEANING

by PAUL VERMEULEN

Agronomist, Mid-Continent Region, USGA Green Section

LIKE MANY courses across the country, The Vintage Club, in Indian Wells, California, has encountered problems using the traditional means of washing equipment. For example, wet clippings that accumulate around a wash area can generate some very unpleasant conversations with golfers who have a keen sense of smell. Another problem is the potential effect on stream ecology caused by the nutrients from decaying clippings that drain into a small stream.

On the mechanical side of things, greased bearings are easily damaged by traditional washing when water penetrates the seals. Given that The Vintage Club is a 36-hole course, the damage done to greased bearings alone was burdening the mechanical staff and escalating the budget for replacement parts.

Another mechanical problem is corrosion and engine damage caused by washing equipment with cold water. This problem can be especially significant for courses that use reclaimed water. Soluble salts in the irrigation supply can literally dissolve the equipment inventory.

To address these problems, Douglas Anderson, superintendent, and Luciano (Chito) Velasquez, maintenance supervisor, retrofitted their wash area with eight dry-cleaning stations. Each station is equipped with an air hose plumbed into a large air compressor normally set at 125 psi. To dry-clean equipment safely, goggles are required to prevent eye injury. To remind the employees of this fact, CAUTION signs were placed on the wall behind the air stations.

To protect the air hoses from damage, they were mounted on automatic-recoil hose reels. Without these reels, the long brass nozzles on the ends of the air hoses would be broken off by employees driving in and out of the dry-cleaning stations. Another safety precaution integrated into the project is a small hole bored through the tip of each brass nozzle. This hole serves as a pressure relief point, should one of the employees hold an air hose against his or her body.

In addition to solving some of their problems, the new dry-cleaning stations have also eliminated the long waiting line in front of the wash area. Before retrofitting, the wash area was equipped with only two water hoses. With the new air stations, the wash

area can accommodate as many as eight employees at a time.

Another advantage of dry-cleaning equipment is that clippings underneath the engine shrouds can be removed without damaging the wiring or hot engine components. If you've ever seen the damage caused by pouring cold water on a hot engine day after day, dry-cleaning probably is starting to sound very appealing.

Dry-cleaning equipment at The Vintage Club has not done away with the need to wash equipment with water, but it has greatly reduced the many problems associated with washing equipment with water. After each mower has been blown off, it is rinsed before parking it inside the maintenance building.

Equipment must still be steam cleaned on a regular schedule. As a general rule, Chito

schedules steam cleaning every two to three weeks for mowers that are used every day.

When the clippings pile up around the new air stations, they are shoveled into trash cans and hauled over to the special waste recycling dumpster. For quick loading at the end of the day, a skip loader is used to put the clippings in the dumpster.

In regions of the country where Mother Nature makes dry-cleaning outdoors an unreasonable proposition, air stations could probably be moved indoors, if a large building is available. For example, air stations could be retrofitted just inside the doorway so that clippings could be removed before the equipment is parked. Also, knowing that only a few gallons of water will be needed to rinse each mower, it would be feasible to install a drain and water hose next to the air stations.

Dry-cleaning equipment at The Vintage Club has not replaced the need to wash equipment with water; it has just greatly reduced the many problems associated with washing equipment with water. After each mower has been blown off, it is rinsed before parking it inside the maintenance building.

