

Preventative Maintenance at a Glance

Allowing the entire crew to participate.

by KEITH HAPP

A KEY COMPONENT of a turfgrass maintenance operation is the equipment available to perform both daily course preparation and, if needed, major renovations. Some courses are blessed with a large inventory of equipment, but it is the equipment that is serviced and ready for use that greatly influences the planning of turf care activities.

The superintendent relies heavily on the mechanic to maintain this equipment, no matter how old or new it may be. To some degree, the entire turf maintenance staff is responsible for the care of the equipment. It is a well-known fact that preventative maintenance programs can extend the useful life of a piece of equipment. To a turf manager, a more important aspect of preventative equipment maintenance is that it allows for effective and efficient flow of turf maintenance activities on the course.

This thought was in mind when Steve Geller, golf course superintendent, and his mechanic, Joseph Pope, designed a preventative maintenance system for the equipment at the Cedar Point Club in Suffolk, Virginia. The system allows the entire crew to participate and share responsibility for equipment upkeep. This strategy provides support for the superintendent and mechanic while fostering a team spirit among the crew.

Steve plans course grooming and maintenance activities well in advance of their occurrence. Prior to doing so, Steve consults with the mechanic and checks an equipment status board located in the shop area.

The board lists all of the equipment in inventory. Everything from greens-mowers to string trimmers is scheduled for regular mechanical inspection. The date of scheduled maintenance is identified as well as the previous service



Communication with the maintenance crew is important when scheduling turf maintenance activities.

date. A significant element of the status board is its simplicity. The maintenance aspects of each piece of equipment vary, but when the equipment (which is numbered) is ready for use, it is clearly identified as such with a green mark in the status column. A red mark means that the equipment is down or needs to be serviced. This marking system reduces the chances of equipment escaping regularly scheduled maintenance and causing unplanned downtime.

Crew involvement begins when their jobs are assigned. The plans for the day are placed on a job board located in the lunch/locker room. With job assignment in hand, crew members check on the status of the equipment needed to complete the day's activity. The status board is conveniently located so that a quick glance at the color code within the status column is easily facilitated. Crew members also examine the due date for upcoming maintenance to provide an additional check and balance for equipment status. The system is reinforced further

by crew members when they report minor equipment performance flaws. Small problems are addressed before they become large.

No system is infallible. Granted, when a piece of equipment is severely damaged, a crew member will not mistakenly take it out on the course. There are times, however, when equipment problems go unnoticed and, needless to say, the most aggravating problems are those that could have been prevented. For example, due to busy golfing schedules at Cedar Point Club, a great deal of mowing takes place before daylight hours. A reel can be out of adjustment, causing a poor-quality cut, or even worse, a hydraulic hose may give way, resulting in a slow leak that does

not immediately impair equipment performance. Both of these problems may go unnoticed until the sun begins to rise. Unplanned-for damage control strategies must then be implemented. Areas may have to be removed and/or turf damage repaired.

Preventative maintenance on turf equipment can pay dividends. Encouraging crew participation in monitoring equipment performance and maintenance requirements minimizes potential breakdowns and equipment failures. Incorporating additional checks and balances expands an operation's ability to meet the requirements placed upon it. Projects and/or activities can be completed as scheduled with the tools purchased to minimize labor needs while maximizing efficiency.

Don't get caught with your pants down. Many equipment problems can be avoided. A strategy such as *Preventative Maintenance at a Glance* could help.

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