With a good portion of the country being ravaged by drought, those of us who have irrigation systems can appreciate the advantage they offer. We who have the responsibility of maintaining turf and landscaped areas realize how fickle Mother Nature can be. It is tough enough to keep our courses and fields in top shape under ideal weather conditions—but when we have the kind of weather we are now experiencing all over the country, it wreaks havoc.

Irrigation has played an important role in caring for the golf courses and playing fields of this country. It helps Mother Nature and puts the water where we want it, when we want it. Without irrigation systems, I wonder how many golf courses in the Midwest would be playable.

The technology available today to maintain all turf and landscaped areas is greater than ever before. There are hundreds of millions of dollars invested in golf courses, sports complexes, university campus grounds, and large landscaped areas. With good management practices we can continue to keep it that way.

Chemical compounds to help us control diseases, pests, and weeds are already in the marketplace. New power equipment is continually being introduced to help us do our job more quickly and effectively. Irrigation components are in place to keep everything green without disturbing the integrity of the landscape. There are many new sprinkler heads that throw out less water per minute. This is just one way to help us conserve.

We know that chemicals are beneficial to keeping the landscape. We also know that some people abuse the use of chemicals in their work. It is the duty of all of us to get the message out concerning the need to keep these products on the market. We must emphasize that with proper use everyone wins.

A few years ago, a story was going around that some football players died and the possible cause was sewage sludge that had been used to topdress the fields. The Milwaukee Sewerage Commission got on this one right away. Through a tremendous effort, Miron Granite is selling well these days, but clearing its name was very costly.

A report came out not long ago that a Navy officer, Lt. George Prior, had died after playing golf. Upon further investigation, some people believed Prior’s death was caused by a fungicide sprayed on the golf course the day before the officer played. One can imagine how that affected the sales of the product. Needless to say, a lawsuit was filed by his family.

Recently I received some information from Fermenta Plant Protection Company. Here is what their statement said: “Listed below are the facts concerning the 1982 death of Navy Lt. George Prior. On May 9, 1988, the Trial Court in the case entered a judgement in favor of the defendants.”

(The defendants were the chemical company.)

“The court found that Lt. Prior died from Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN), which was caused by a viral infection. A review of all medical writings regarding TEN confirmed that Dacol 2787 has never been associated with the disease. Dacol 2787 has never been used on golf-course turf turf for more than 18 years, with over three billion rounds of golf being played without any reported incidents of TEN. The summary conclusion was that extensive evidence developed for this case, including product usage information from more than 18 years, clearly demonstrated that Dacol 2787 fungicide did not cause TEN, that resulted in Lt. Prior’s death.”

The effort to keep this product on the market must have been Herculean. The cost to the company had to be enormous, and in the end there is no proof that Dacol 2787 was the cause.

If you were told that you had to stop watering your greens and fairways for whatever reason, you would fight like hell. If after the turf died it was found that we could have watered a minimum amount to keep it alive, the damage was already done. The cost of doing business today is skyrocketing because it seems that whatever we do, we had better plan to defend that action later on down the road.

What a sorry state of affairs it has turned out to be.