

Maintenance Shops: Get Organized This Winter

By Holly Gibson



A sturdy, spacious workbench is a must for the mechanic's work station.

As a golf course superintendent or sports turf manager, you might spend as much as one third of each work day based out of your maintenance building. How you set up your shop not only makes you more efficient, but also reflects what you expect from your employees.

If your shop is clean and well-organized, your employees will know they are expected to perform in the same way. If equipment and supplies are placed haphazardly, employees will be more likely to approach their jobs in the same manner.

Fortunate superintendents have new facilities that they helped design. However, most have old buildings, often affectionately called "the barn" or the "maintenance shed." It is difficult to imagine a "shed" as a clean, high-tech modern facility. However, that is what it should be.

As operations slow for the winter, the off months are the perfect time to put full-time employees to work reorganiz-



A well-designed fertilizer storage area. Fertilizer is kept off the floor and forklift access is easy.

ing the maintenance building. Certain changes can be accomplished with some sweat, plywood, and paint while other improvements will demand more money and time. If you can't accomplish everything at once, rank the items and make a multi-year plan. Add your plan to your maintenance budget along with justification for the changes.

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Go With A Zone Plan

Just as your home is broken down into living areas with common needs, the maintenance facility should be similarly designed. Jerry Cheesman, a former instructor at Lake City Community College in Lake City, FL promoted the

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zonal idea to his students. The concept involves designating certain areas for accomplishing specific functions.

To design a zonal-concept maintenance facility, you must first list the tasks you want to accomplish in your maintenance facility. These tasks include daily equipment maintenance, employee breaks, employee counseling, chemical mixing, parts storage, and office administration. Some operations will have chores that others don't, such as golf cart maintenance.

Most tasks will fall into 11 different zones. The following is a discussion of each zone and what it should include.

Administrative Zone. This includes office space for you and your staff. The size and function of your staff will dictate who needs private offices and who can share. In general, you want these offices to be insulated for both sound and temperature. It's hard to prepare a budget when you are listening to a reel grinder.

Also, many of you work with computers, and they need a steady source of

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electricity and a temperature-controlled environment. If you have a computer-controlled centralized irrigation system, then you want the computer located in a safe place where it won't be knocked down or unplugged.

You should have at least one room with a door that closes so you can have confidential employee conferences.

The employee break room is probably best located adjacent to the administrative offices. Employees are out in the weather for most of their work day. They need a chance to come inside for breaks. What you include in the break room varies from site to site. Microwave ovens, refrigerators, stoves, ice machines, sinks, soft drink and snack machines, and furniture are some options. You can also include a bulletin board for posting

job opportunities, employee information, and general flyers. The goal is to give employees a chance to relax and revive.

Locker facilities for both men and women can be included. Also, some sites provide lodging for temporary employees.

Equipment Repair Area. This is the mechanic's territory. The mechanic needs an area where he can expect other employees not to bother his things or his work. The area should be large enough to accommodate the largest piece of equipment. Take care to have the adequate lighting, ventilation, and electrical power. Locate storage cabinets, work benches, and tool storage close to this area so the mechanic won't have to go far to get tools.

Parts Inventory. You can save yourself many hours of downtime by keeping parts available in your parts inventory. Locate the parts storage near the equipment repair area. The key to good inventory is knowing what you have and where it is located. At a minimum, stock parts you need frequently or parts that would cause you significant downtime during crucial periods.

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Bins or shelves are often the easiest way to organize the parts. Devise a system that works and write it down so everyone who needs to know is aware of the system. You don't want your mechanic to be the only person who understands the system. If he leaves, you'll spend hours or even days sorting out parts.

Keep a record of parts that the mechanic uses. This record will help you reorder and track equipment problems.

Daily Maintenance Area. There should be a designated place for equipment operators to conduct daily maintenance checks on equipment. This area should not interfere with the mechanic's work. However, employees need access to oil, grease, fuel, and necessary tools.

Make provisions for proper disposal of wastes. When employees change the oil, they should dump the old oil into a designated 55-gallon drum. Have a funnel nearby so employees can avoid spills. Put someone in charge of calling a designated recycling facility to collect the oil when the drum is full.

Fuel should be stored according to all applicable regulations. Contact your

local EPA offices for information. Prohibit smoking around fuel.

Equipment Washing Area. This area should be a concrete pad of sufficient size for the largest piece of equipment you plan to wash. It needs to drain into an appropriate container if you plan to wash off equipment exposed to hazardous materials. Your local EPA office

Organize the storage area so daily-use equipment is easily accessible.

can tell you which standards your operation must comply with for pesticide rinsate.

Locate the area adjacent to water and electrical outlets. You can put steam cleaners and air compressors nearby. Be sure drainage from the area is carefully controlled. Place a covered container next to the site for employees to dis-

pose of contaminated cleaning rags. Have the same recycling company that handles the oil handle these items.

Equipment Storage Space. Your equipment will last longer if you protect it from the elements. Sun, moisture, and frost can take years off equipment life, especially in severe climates. Organize the storage area so daily-use equipment is easily accessible.

Doors should be wide and tall enough so that equipment can be moved in and out efficiently. They should be equipped with locks for security reasons. Take expansion into account when designing and building the storage facility.

Chemical Storage and Mixing Area. This part of the maintenance building is likely to change the most in the next decade. B.J. Cannon, instructor at Lake City Community College, Lake City, FL, says he encourages his students to design maintenance facilities with preventative measures in mind.

One facility designed at the college has the chemical mixing and storage area protected by a six-foot-high chain link fence topped with barbed wire. Adjacent to the

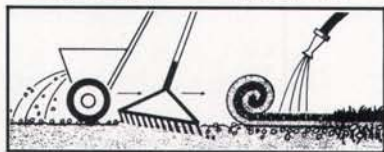
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entry area, there is a private room with a washer, dryer, and shower. Any employee who has come in contact with hazardous materials can remove his clothes and place them into the washing machine. After taking a shower and dressing with clean clothes, he can exit the room from a second door.

You can add this type of decontamination facility to almost any maintenance building. By following proper procedures, employees exposed to pesticides can clean up efficiently and keep contamination to a limited area.

The chemical storage area needs to be separate from other portions of the maintenance facility. The area must have locked doors to restrict entrance. Shelving is important for keeping small containers of chemicals separated and orderly. Larger containers should be stored on concrete floors.



Irrigation parts should be stored separate from the equipment parts inventory.

In the mixing area, all safety devices and tools necessary for measuring and weighing materials should be organized and easily available. Provide a solid, sturdy table for mixing operations.

Employees should always wear protective apparel when working with chemicals. A shower and eye wash should

be in the room in the event of accidents or spills. Absorbent pillows should be quickly accessible. Check with your local EPA office for the latest regulations for chemical mixing facilities.

Fertilizer Storage. Provide a raised area away from liquids where you can stack fertilizer bags. Allow adequate space for traffic and equipment to reduce the chance of bags punctures. The area should be accessible to forklifts for palletted products.

Seed Storage. Seed should be kept cool, dry, and away from chemicals. Store bags on shelves or wood pallets. Allow room for loading and unloading. Provide space for pregerminating seed in drums or containers.

Irrigation Inventory. This section should be separate from the equipment parts inventory. Shelves with bins and compartments for frequently needed parts are advised. Store repair manuals neatly on bookshelves for quick access. There should be a work area and a large, solid table next to electrical outlets. Keep all testing equipment and repair tools in this area. Provide access and room for the utility vehicle used by the irrigation specialist.

The key to a successful storage facility is planning it according to your needs and keeping it organized. Make all employees responsible for putting away and maintaining their equipment and tools. Schedule time for clean up and organizing.

As your needs change, you can alter the maintenance facility. It is important to stay in contact with regulatory authorities so you can efficiently comply with regulations.

Proper maintenance shop planning, design, and organization now can save you countless headaches down the road.

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