



Off-season/non-traditional events at your facility

YOUR BOSS CALLS and tells you you're hosting a series of concerts on the sports field you have poured your time, knowledge and dedication into. The worst possible scenarios flash through your mind as you picture masses of traffic, soil compaction and dead grass. Fortunately you are not the only sports turf manager that needs to deal with event issues. With proper planning, preparation and communication, your sports field can be back and in playable condition within a few days. Rest easy with some tips to help your event go more smoothly.

Keep invoices, rental agreements and any other receipts or paperwork. You never know when this may be needed.

BEFORE THE EVENT

Events are stressful, but sports turf managers that stay involved and communicate openly often see the most success. Involving yourself from the beginning and staying informed is essential so you are aware of plans and expectations for the event. Be sure to attend all the contract talks and event meetings with the event promoter, administration and other individuals. Do your research and be prepared to ask questions, present concerns, communicate your needs and influence how the field is used. You know your field best, so be prepared to explain in detail why something can or cannot take place. Establishing clear lines of communication with key individuals can help avoid miscommunication, establish your own credibility and give you the opportunity to present realistic expectations for field recovery.

The following questions can be presented during meetings to assist you in determining expectations for the event and to develop a field recovery plan.

- How many events will be taking place?
- Who will be using the field? What age group takes part in the events?
- What shoe type is needed for the event?
- What will participants be doing during the event? What sport or event will be taking place?
- How many participants will there be? Will there be seating or parking issues?
- What time of year will the event take place? What time of day will the event take place?
- How long will the event last? What is the frequency of the damage? One day? Two weeks?
- Where on the field will the damage be taking place?
- What is the budget for the event and the field?
- Are there any site or location issues that need to be addressed?
- How will the field be needed? Will a floor covering be put down? Will the turf be used?
- Is the event being scheduled around other events? What is the time period to get the field back into playable condition?

Prepare a budget in advance based on expected damage. This should include field maintenance before and after the event, field repair, field protection, replacement costs, staff and labor costs, and any other costs associated with the event. Present it to the event promoter and administration. Be honest in your budget and be realistic and clear with what is necessary to get the field back in healthy, safe, playable condition in a reasonable time period.

Keep accurate and detailed records. Keep a copy of the contract so you know exactly what you are responsible for. Take pictures of the entire event from start to finish. Keep invoices, rental agreements and any other receipts or paperwork. You never know when this may be needed.

Manage your staff respectfully and efficiently. Keep a positive attitude to prevent both you and them from getting stressed out. Train employees so everyone is equally skilled and you are not limited to certain people

doing specialized tasks. This builds respect and trust within the crew. Reward creativity and teamwork. And most importantly, have fun.

Manage your turf. Maintaining the quality of the field right up until the event takes place will promote faster recovery. Even if the field is being replaced, maintaining the field at a high level will display your dedication and professionalism and may give you leverage during contract and budget negotiations.

Use your network. STMA provides an excellent network of sports turf managers that have extensive event experience and are always more than willing to provide insight and tips on their own experiences.

POST-EVENT

Now the real work begins. Depending on the event and the damage your field sustained, recovery can vary. Some events may require total field replacement, while other events may only need cultivation, topdressing, and seeding to get the field back into safe, playable condition. After the event is over, take stock of the damage and determine if it is what you expected or if there is additional repair necessary. Communicate with administration about the damage and be honest. Sugar coating the condition of the field will only hurt you in the long run. The bottom line is if you planned properly prior to the event, presented realistic expectations about damage to administration, and agreed on a budget, the recovery process can be relatively quick and successful.

Events can be stressful, but by keeping a positive attitude and an open mind, you can accept the challenges and turn it into a fun, learning experience that will benefit you for the future. ■

This is the third in a series of seven articles in the 2010 Ewing Professional Development Series. STMA and Ewing have again partnered in this series to bring sports turf industry professional development and career issues to the forefront. For more information, go to www.STMA.org or www.Ewing1.com.