

Q&A



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Questions?

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7 inches from the midday sun

THAT'S BEEN MY NEW ADDRESS for most of July and it doesn't look like there's any relief in sight for August and the Midwest. It's actually a Rob Thomas lyric smoothed out by Carlos Santana... Man it's a hot one, like 7 inches from the midday sun. With several days over 100 degrees most of the states neighboring Iowa are also experiencing D2-Severe to D3-Extreme Drought according to the US Drought Monitor. So as we close out baseball and head toward football I've been fielding several woe-is-me and what-to-do type questions.

Voluntary water restrictions have been occurring in a few cities and some small towns have been restricting water to Iowa golf courses and athletic fields. It is important to ask the local water authority for their written "Drought Contingency Plan." If you use city water contact the local city water, power, and light company.

When drawing water from a stream or river you should have a permit from the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) who will be able to also tell you when the stream reaches a critical "low flow" for aquatic life that requires you to stop pumping water. Either way it's time to ask questions about possible water restrictions. It will be interesting to find out what priority your facility has among all the water users, golf courses, home owners, car washes, and other businesses.

To receive water during restrictions most water authorities want you to have a water reduction plan that quantitatively shows that you are meeting their targets of water reduction based on the level of drought, i.e. alert 20% reduction, critical <40% reduction, emergency >40% reduction. Guess

work generally won't suffice, you need meter reading from previous years showing what your normal water use would be and then you will need to meet their targeted percent water reductions.

Be sure to make the case for your facility as an important economic enterprise in the city but be prepared to show how much you will cut back on water use or you might get completely cut off. Communicate to water suppliers that athletic fields, like golf courses, use a lot of sand for construction and topdressing making

dressing, sod repair, lips, mound work etc., so we can put the baseball field to bed and have it ready for spring ball.

I can't wait for the first crisp cool morning in September to put on the pullover and walk amongst the seedlings dripping from the hiss of irrigation.

Summer seeding and topdressing of high school football fields is never ideal but between soccer, track and football, it's the only time some of us can get on the field. We've been able to keep seedling turf of Kentucky bluegrass

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it critical that water supply continues in some capacity.

Many irrigated high school baseball fields are simply abandoned in late July and August since the season has ended and that's just about the time that summer patch really gets cranking. I have been dealing with summer patch on my high maintenance Kentucky bluegrass infields over the past 3 years and our best success comes with monthly fungicide applications May-July followed by just enough post-season irrigation to keep the grass out of dormancy until September. When we abandoned the field in late July drought stress and summer patch nearly took out the entire infield.

I can tell that my communication skills have gotten better because the coaches from the three local teams we work with have been all over me about making the August/September plan to spruce up the baseball field. Even though the season is over they have learned the importance of seeding, top-

and perennial ryegrass alive through summer's heat and drought but the plants are weak and barely growing in height. We skipped our July nitrogen fertilizer because of the heat but regardless of the temperature we will make our next application in mid-August.

It's Ragbrai time again and 20,000 young and old hippies and I spend a week riding our bicycles 500 miles across Iowa; it's the closest thing to Woodstock I've ever seen. We've got a bunch of turf types in our converted coed school bus with a solar shower tank on the roof. Check out Ragbrai online and mark your calendar for next year if you want an adventure you won't forget and then ring my bell at STMA's national conference; we've got room for a sports turf manager or two on the tour.

So with three Days of Ragbrai predicted to be over 100 F, I've got fear in my heart and a question for you—what is the melting point of spandex? ■