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President's Message

Dr. Mike Goatley

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Skin cancer is real danger for outside workers

I HAVE DECIDED TO BE A "LIFE SAVER" THIS MONTH. No, I have not joined the Avengers. I am simply following up on a challenge by my dermatologist, Dr. Chad Johnston. Dr. Johnston played football at West Virginia and his passion for sports remains strong as he volunteers as coach for the Blacksburg High School football team. This gives Chad a definite interest in sports turf, and after he found out what I do and my current role in STMA, he suggested I take the opportunity of using my President's Message to pass along some very important information—don't mess around with skin cancer. It is one of the easiest diseases to cure if treated in its early stages, but it becomes deadly if ignored.

As a kid working in the tobacco fields of Kentucky, I considered it a country boy's badge of honor to be as tanned as possible during the summer. Because of my failure to respect the sun as a youth, I now have to pay Dr. Johnston a visit every 6 months. Over the past year I have had four basal cell carcinomas removed. A most recent spot found just below my left eye requires a visit to a plastic surgeon due to its location. (One of my "friends" said, 'A visit to a plastic surgeon might not be such a bad thing for you.' I hope you mistake me for Brad Pitt later this year). It struck me while watching sports turf managers go about their business under the blistering sun this summer that there are many others that need to be examined by a dermatologist regularly.

Do you have skin lesions that just won't heal? Have moles recently changed in color or shape? And is there anyone that can help identify trouble spots that perhaps you can't (or don't want to) see? My wife, Lisa, identifies most of my suspicious lesions and insists on accompanying me to Dr. Johnston's office. It's rather embarrassing for a 50-year old man to take his wife to the doctor's office, but she is going to insist that certain spots that don't concern me are biopsied by Dr. Johnston, and almost every time, the spots she identified have been found to be malignant.

One of the great things about our jobs is working outdoors, but chronic exposure to the sun is ultimately a terrible thing. Be sure to liberally apply sunscreen every day to all of your exposed skin, especially your ears and nose. Our annual conference trade show always features a free skin cancer examination booth, so those of you coming to Daytona Beach next January, be sure to take advantage of this service. But if there is ANYTHING suspicious right now, don't wait for Daytona Beach. Schedule an examination as soon as possible. It might just save your life.

Now that my superhero duties are complete, I ask that you pay special attention to our Compensation Report on page 40 in this month's issue. I believe you will find the information to be both interesting and useful. Take care.

Mike Goatley