Tips to take the terror out of giving presentations

WHAT'S SCARIER to most Americans than spiders, heights, or even death? There hasn't been a horror movie made about it yet, but more than 75% of Americans surveyed report that they suffer from "glossophobia," a debilitating fear of public speaking. Statistically, far more of us claim that we would prefer death to giving a speech; even comedian Jerry Seinfeld used to joke that at a funeral, most people would rather be lying in the casket than delivering the eulogy.

Why is the prospect of trying to communicate information in front of even one person so horrifying? Most glossophobes fear looking bad, being criticized, suffering rejection, and losing business or friends, all because they are certain they will forget what they'd planned to say. Maybe you have had the experience of forgetting a speech or presentation, or you've seen it happen to someone else, and you don't want it to happen to you. Ever.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ROTE?

Most people memorize speeches by rote-or word-for-word repetition-and try to deliver it exactly as they've written it. You probably don't realize that this method of learning is actually setting you up to forget what you're supposed to say because it creates tremendous stress, which is in turn the number one killer of memory.

Or if you do manage to remember every single word you'd planned to say, the effort requires so much mental energy that you come off as a terrible communicator. You're not really there while you're speaking because all of your efforts go into remembering what comes next. If, heaven forbid, something distracts you, or someone interrupts you with a question during a memorized presentation, thinking about anything other than "What comes next?" can throw you completely off-track. Your mind may literally go blank, just as you feared.

And there's one more problem with word-for-word learning: 93% of our communication happens non-verbally. The majority of the message your audience receives has very little to do with the actual words you say but with body language, tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions. So you can't expect to convey ease and expertise non-verbally if your mental and physical energies are completely preoccupied with delivering a verbatim speech. You'll simply be too tense, and it will show.

As a real estate professional, for example, when you're discussing listing or selling a prospect's home, an effective presentation is one in which you are clearly the expert and know more about selling a home than the person who wants the home sold.

Microphone image ©istockphoto.com/JasonRWarren

WHAT'S WRONG WITH NOTES?

What about the security blanket of an outline or notes? You may feel you need notes to stay on track when giving a presentation, but if you're tied to those notes, you aren't free to make eye contact, a key element of non-verbal communication. You'll also be stuck behind a podium, and if people can't see two-thirds of your body, that has a serious impact on the 93% non-verbal communication aspect of your presentation. Notes may make you feel a little better, but they also take away a crucial tool for your effectiveness.

As a real estate professional, for example, when you're discussing listing or selling a prospect's home, an effective presentation is one in which you are clearly the expert and know more about selling a home than the person who wants the home sold. Likewise, an American who is fluent in French doesn't need to reference a French translation guide while vacationing in Paris. So if you're fluent in your topic, you shouldn't need to consult your notes, and your audience of one or many will sense this on a subconscious level. However, if you feel you must use notes, consult them very little or not at all, and you'll gain huge credibility as an expert.

FOUR TIPS TO RELIEVE PRESENTATION TERROR

Regardless of how deeply rooted your fear of public speaking is, with a few simple adjustments to your method of preparation, you can grow more confident about your abilities so that much of your fear disappears. When you know what you're going to say and that your presentation is strong, public-speaking may still be a little nerve-wracking, but it's exciting, too. Try these tips to help turn that stomach-turning anxiety into the rush of great communication.

1. Know what you're talking about. When you prepare an organized presentation of any kind, you must be knowledgeable about the company, product, or situation. Talk about things you actually know well. If you're not confident that you know all that you need to, commit to doing thorough research and learn what you need to know to feel and look expert. If you truly don't know what you're talking about, it will show, and all the tricks and techniques in the world won't help.

2. Decide on a few key points. Good keynote speakers typically don't have more than three or four key things for the audience to take away from their presentations. The classic presentation formula is a story that makes the audience laugh in the beginning, a few key points for them to take away (usually illustrated with stories), followed by an emotionally moving story at the end.

Another basic formula for effective communication is: Tell your audience what you're going to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you told them.

3. Create visual triggers. Invent pictures in your mind and "store" them in various places around the room where you'll deliver the presentation. The pictures then become your speech. For example, if one of your points is about achieving goals, you can envision a set of goal posts as a visual representation of that concept. If you want to make a point about freedom, envision an American flag somewhere in the room, or a huge stack of money if you want to talk about increasing profits.

4. Relax, have fun and be yourself. People respond best to a message when the person delivering it is genuine. With sufficient preparation of the right type, you'll feel comfortable enough to be yourself in front of a group. You can then demonstrate how much you believe in what you're saying. When you can relax and be an authentic human being, you tap into powerful communication.

FROM FEARFUL TO FEARLESS

You've undoubtedly heard a few presentations-both good and bad-in your day, so you know it's a fact: you listen to and respect those speakers who talk to you, not at you. A conversation is always better than a lecture, isn't it? When you are preparing to make a presentation, know that people don't mind if you stumble over a couple of words; in most cases they don't even notice. What they will notice, though, and mind a great deal, is being read to or BS'd. If your audience feels as if you're insincere or unknowledgeable, they may give you real reason to be a glossophobe! But if you're prepared, knowledgeable, and relaxed, you can expect to get the results you want, whether that's more sales, promotions, or thunderous applause from your devoted audience. ■

Roger Seip's company, Freedom Speakers and Trainers, specializes in memory training and workshops, www.deliverfreedom.com.

Making peace with the rules:

a guide to getting along with HR

IF YOU THINK THAT GETTING ALONG WITH YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES AREA AT WORK IS DIFFICULT, try living with one full-time! My husband informs me all the time how an HR wife is no picnic. HR is all about paperwork, consistency, rules and policies. Many managers are not big fans of HR as they feel it can be interfering, intrusive and legalistic when trying to manage their department the way they want. However, HR can be your best friend when you are faced with a "sticky" employment dilemma and can help keep you and your company out of potential litigation issues.

Think of this scenario: You are a turf manager whose job success is based on having safe, multi-functional, aesthetically pleasing playing fields. And while you have all the experience, knowledge and training in this area, you may be forced to rely on employees who have probably never received training in turf management, probably have little interest in turf management, and whose primary focus for success in their job is something completely different than managing turf. You could write up strict instructions on how to carefully maintain the turf, but the reality is most of these same employees will not read your instructions or instead feel like they have a better way to maintain your turf than you. How successful do you predict you would be with this workforce? How nervous would you be regarding the success of your field? Welcome to the world of Human Resources!

LIMITING LIABILITIES

Human Resource departments are charged with "limiting liabilities" in the workplace, from safety concerns, to legal personnel issues, to compliance with government standards. HR people are usually trained/certified in legal personnel issues, but often are not the ones directly supervising the majority of company employees. That responsibility falls upon managers who are trained in completely different areas, have a multitude of other activities besides personnel management, and whose job performance is primarily based on productivity (i.e., producing top notch athletic surfaces)—something completely different than adhering to personnel policies.

To assist in limiting the liabilities of potential personnel lawsuits and pitfalls, HR establishes rules and writes policies/handbooks to help managers avoid legal trouble. But rules and policies are only as good as the managers who a) *know the rules/policies*; i.e., actually read a handbook; and b) are willing to carry rules and policies out as written and established.

Let's take a look at a common "pitfall" area: lunch breaks. There are very specific federal laws, and sometimes even more stringent, state-specific Wage and Hour standards that must be complied with. Usually it consists of a 30-minute, unpaid rest break that must occur somewhere within a shift of 5 or more hours worked (make sure to check on what applies to your area) for all hourly non-exempt employees. Your handbook almost certainly has provisions to comply with work time breaks. Here's where this policy is sometimes "fudged" by managers/supervisors: hourly employees wanting to "work-through" lunch so they can go home early; game day events/schedules where it's hard for you or anyone else to take a scheduled break; employees that grab a quick bite and head back out to work early just because they want to. Each of these is an area for a possible Wage and Hour violation.

Wage and Hour does not care whether or not an employee was "willing" or "wanting" to shorten/not take their break, it's a violation all the same. When Wage and Hour investigates this type of scenario they don't stop with one employee or for a 1-week time period; they will pull records (usually time sheets/electronic payroll data) and will assign fines for *every* occurrence for *every* employee. Additional fines will be levied if it is perceived that company/management willingly participated in the neglect of Wage and Hour laws. Your HR department almost assuredly has established a policy to *limit this liability* but again the policy only works if it is enforced by managers/supervisors properly.

But how do you change things up when you've always had an understanding in your department that you could "get around" a specific rule/policy? Whenever in doubt, BLAME HR. HR is a great scapegoat for any rule or policy because they would rather be labeled the "bad guy" and limit potential liabilities than have lawsuits on their hands.

Image credit: olivier26 / 123RF Stock Photo

Statements like, "HR/management is really cracking down on lunch breaks, accurate time sheets, (insert your favorite scenario here). Even though we've done something different in the past, HR wants it done by the book from now on." Provide copies of the policy from the employee handbook for backup; yes, your employees were given a copy of their handbook/have access online, but the chances that they've read it or even know where it's located are slim at best.

The secret to getting along with HR? Follow the rules that have been set. Easier said than done and irritating no doubt when trying to manage your department the way you want. But rules and policies are not established to give HR something to do (although I'm sure many of you suspect this to be true); they are established because somewhere, at sometime, there has been a problem with employees in this area (employees working through lunch breaks, falsifying time cards, etc.) or because there is a state or federal law that will cause big problems for the company if they are not followed correctly.

Think of the multitude of laws/policies established for our society on paying/filing taxes, traffic/driving, and "playing nicely with others." Laws weren't established for something for lawmakers to do (although again it's easy to sometimes think so), they were established because someone didn't pay their taxes; didn't stop for a red light, or didn't respect someone's boundaries by punching him in the nose. HR policies and societal laws are established because at sometime, somewhere, someone "wasn't playing nicely in the sandbox."

USE THE HANDBOOK!

Get familiar with your company policies/handbook. If you've already read it, read it again. If you don't understand a specific policy, get with HR or management for clarification on why this policy exists and how it applies to your situation. HR is always more willing and appreciative to working with a manager/supervisor *before* a problem exists than after a violation/lawsuit has occurred. The truth is managers and supervisors are always held to a different standard than employees. A manager violating a company policy is always more visible simply because employees are watching their every move. And while an employee may be all in favor of one rule bent on their behalf, don't ever underestimate how quickly they'll turn on you if they feel they have been "jilted" on another rule not strictly followed. Treating employees consistently by company rules and policies not only allows you to stay at peace with HR, but limits liabilities for you and your organization in the future. ■

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Identifying and managing petroleum spills and leaks on turf

AT TIMES, petroleum products may spill or leak onto sports fields maintained with motorized power equipment. Fuel, oil, hydraulic and brake fluids, and grease can injure turfgrasses and have the potential to pollute soil, surface water bodies and groundwater. Turf injury symptoms often vary depending on the type of leak or spill. For example, hydraulic fluid leaks tend to damage turf in a straight line pattern, while a gasoline spill often causes an irregularly shaped, circular dead area of turf with a very distinct edge or margin. The amount of time turfgrasses require to recover after contacting petroleum often depends on a number of factors including the product type, volume, temperature and ingredients, and soil and climatic conditions.

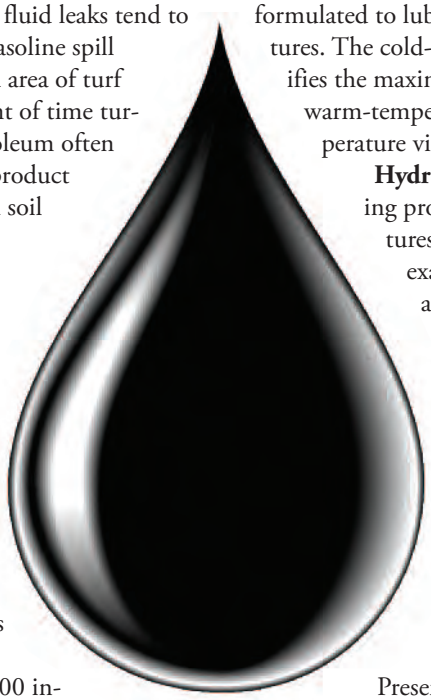
Petroleum products contain carbon - 83 to 87%; hydrogen - 10 to 14%; nitrogen - 0.1 to 2%; oxygen - 0.05 to 1.5%; sulfur - 0.05 to 6.0%; and metals - < 0.1%. Petroleum-contaminated soil and water may prevent turfgrass seeds from germinating, restrict photosynthesis or kill plants.

Products are categorized based on their composition and intended use.

Gasoline is a mix of hydrocarbons with a chemical formula of C_4 to C_{12}. Other substances including anti-rust and anti-icing agents and detergents may be added to improve performance. Gasoline often contains more than 500 individual compounds, is insoluble in water at a temperature of 68°F, has a boiling temperature of 80 to 437°F and has a flash point of -45°F. Depending on the refinement process, gasoline contains 85-88% carbon, 12-15% hydrogen and no oxygen.

Ethanol, with a chemical formula of CH_3CH_2OH, can be produced by fermenting sugars from corn, and distilling the fermented solution. This fuel can also be produced from the cellulose of several plants including switchgrass. Almost all of the ethanol used for industrial purposes contains 5% water. Ethanol has a boiling temperature of 172°F, a freezing temperature of -142.5°F and a flash point of 55°F. Ten percent ethanol is often mixed with 90% gasoline to create gasohol. Ethanol is also available as a high-level blend known as E85 for use in flexible fuel vehicles.

Diesel Fuel, like gasoline, contains hydrocarbons and additives. Additives may reduce wear and oxidation, deactivate metals or improve ignition and stability. Number 2 diesel fuels have a chemical formula of C_8 to C_{25}, a flash point of 165°F, and contain 84-87% carbon, 13-16 % hydrogen and no oxygen.



Petroleum Illustration ©istockphoto.com/julichka

Motor oil is classified according to viscosity standards developed by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). In general, high-viscosity oils are "thick" compared to low-viscosity oils, which are considered to be "thin." Each standard grade of motor oil is defined by viscosity in accordance with SAE J300 specifications. Multi-grade or multi-viscous oils (for example SAE 5W-30 and 10W-30) are formulated to lubricate engine parts at both low and high temperatures. The cold-temperature standard (W or "winter" grade) specifies the maximum cold temperature viscosity, and the warm-temperature standard specifies the minimum high-temperature viscosity.

Hydraulic fluid, a very versatile hydrocarbon-containing product, is capable of performing at high temperatures (for example, 110 to 130°F) and pressures (for example, 3000 psi or greater). The base fluid may be a refined mineral oil, synthetically produced or bio-based, and may have fire-retardant properties. Typical additives include: corrosion (0.05-1.0%) and oxidation (0.2-1.5%) inhibitors, de-foaming (2-20ppm), anti-wear (0.5-2.0%) and anti-friction (0.1-0.75%) agents, and detergents (0.02-0.2%). Hydraulic fluid usually has a flashpoint at least 68°F higher than the maximum fluid "working" temperature. Atomized hydraulic fluid leaking from a hose may catch fire if exposed to an ignition source.

Brake Fluid is a type of hydraulic fluid. Presently, three material groups: mineral oil, silicon or polyglycon ether (glycol), are used as brake fluids. Brake fluids with a glycol base are most widely used commercially. The boiling point varies among the brake fluid grades established by the Department of Transportation (DOT). For example, the dry boiling point of DOT Grades 3, 4, 5 and 5.1 is 401°F, 446°F, 500°F and 500°F, respectively. With the exception of DOT 5 (silicon base), the pH of these fluids must be no lower than 7.0 and no higher than 11.5.

Grease used for lubrication is recognized by the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM D 288, Standard Definitions of Terms Relating to Petroleum) as "A solid to semifluid product of dispersion of a thickening agent in liquid lubricant. Other ingredients imparting special properties may be included." The combination of base oil, thickener and additives affect the viscosity and intended function. Grease is usually classified according to thickness on a 0 (soft) to 6 (firm) scale.

Turfgrasses are capable of removing pollutants from soil and water. For example, researchers at Kansas State University deter-

mined that the breakdown of total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) in soil with an initial concentration of 0.05 lb. TPH per lb. of dry soil in which bermudagrass and tall fescue was maintained was reduced by 68% and 62%, respectively, after 1 year. Similarly, the concentration of TPH of refinery wastewater steadily decreased when perennial ryegrasses were introduced into an aquatic environment remediation system for 35 days. This research demonstrated that, in addition to appropriate plant species, the activity of microorganisms in soil and water is a critically important part of a bioremediation or purification project.

Soils can support huge populations of beneficial microorganisms most of which live in very thin water films surrounding the soil particles. It has been estimated that one spoonful of soil may contain as many as 8,000,000 species of bacteria. In sports turfs, many microorganisms gain energy as they break down carbon-rich compounds including grass clippings, roots, root exudates and certain fertilizers (for example, methylene urea, Milorganite, urea formaldehyde…). Under favorable conditions, microbial activity in the area surrounding turfgrass roots known as the rhizosphere is most often intense, and populations of microorganisms may be as much as 10 to 100 times greater than those in adjacent soils in which there are no roots.

Research regarding the direct effects of petroleum on turfgrasses and recommended treatments after a spill or leak is very limited.

Research conducted on TifEagle and Tifdwarf bermudagrass, and Sea Isle seashore paspalum greens at Edison College in Fort Myers, FL demonstrated that a spill of either a biodegradable vegetable/ester-based hydraulic fluid or a petroleum/mineral-based hydraulic fluid resulted in larger areas of damaged turf and a more intense foliar burn compared to a synthetic hydraulic fluid. Two-thirds ounce of hydraulic fluid was applied in a straight line through the center of each appropriate plot from a height of about ½ inch. The greens' soil was a 90:10 sand:peat mixture, and each of the three hydraulic fluids was at ambient air temperature when applied. At 15 days after treatment, bermudagrasses and seashore paspalum in plots treated with synthetic hydraulic fluid were completely healed.

A second study was conducted to investigate the effects of both spill volume (0.03 oz., 0.1 oz. and 0.17 oz.) and hydraulic fluid temperature (122°F, 140°F, 158°F and 176°F) on Tifdwarf bermudagrass maintained at greens height. By day 7, bermudagrass receiving the vegetable/ester-based hydraulic fluid or the petroleum/mineral-based hydraulic fluid was severely damaged. By day 28, bermudagrass receiving the synthetic hydraulic fluid treatments showed minimal damage compared to bermudagrass receiving the other two hydraulic fluids. The area of damaged turf and the intensity of foliar burn increased with rising fluid spill volume. While the temperature of the fluid at the time of treatment did not seem to affect the amount of damage caused by the vegetable/ester-based or the petroleum/mineral-based hydraulic fluids, the intensity of burn following the synthetic hydraulic oil treatment did increase with rising fluid temperature.

Researchers at Texas A&M University studied the effects of spray applications of gasoline (low octane, leaded), motor oil (30 SAE), and hydraulic (Ford Loader and Backhoe) and brake (Johnson's Supreme Heavy Duty) fluids, and a direct application of grease (Pennzoil 705) at ambient air temperature on Tifgreen bermudagrass growing in a sandy loam soil and mowed twice each week at a 1-inch cutting height with clippings returned before the petroleum products were applied. The researchers also evaluated the perform-

figure 1

A Comparison of Several Fuels[a]

Property

Fuel	Chemical Structure	Fuel Material	Flash Point	ignition Temperature	Comments
BIODIESEL	$C_{12} - C_{22}$	Fats and oils- animal fats, waste cooking oil, rapeseed, soybean	212 °F to 338 °F	-300 °F	Higher percentage blends may affect seals and hoses; improved lubrication compared to that of conventional diesel fuel
DIESEL #2	$C_8 - C_{25}$	Crude oil	165 °F	-600 °F	
ETHANOL	CH_3CH_2OH	Corn, small grains, cellulose	55 °F	793 °F	Lubricants may have to be added
GASOLINE	$C_4 - C_{12}$	Crude oil	-45 °F	495 °F	

[a] From: Fuel Properties. U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Alternative Fuels Data Center; *http://www.afdc.energy.gov/afdc/fuels/properties.html*.

figure 2

Summary of Recommended Corrective Treatments and Recovery Times for Bermudagrass after Five Intentional Petroleum Spills (Texas A&M University).[a]

Petroleum Product	Recommended Treatment	----- Recovery Time in Weeks ----- Treated	Untreated
GASOLINE	None	4	4
MOTOR OIL	Detergent	4	8 to 10
HYDRAU1IC FLUID	Detergent	4	8 to 10
BRAKE FLUID	Detergent	2 to 3	8
GREASE	None	8 to 10	8 to 10

[a] From: Johns, D. and J.B. Beard. 1979. Effects and treatments of petroleum spills on bermudagrass turf. Agron. Journ. Vol. 71. Pp. 945-947. Nov.-Dec.

ance of calcined clay fines (0.2 mm.), activated charcoal and detergent (anionic and non-ionic granules) as corrective treatments. Gasoline, motor oil, hydraulic fluid and brake fluid were applied to the bermudagrass at a rate of 4 oz./sq.ft. Grease was uniformly and directly spread on the turf. Activated charcoal, calcined clay or detergent was applied within 20 minutes later at the rate of 0.2 oz./sq.ft., 2.1 oz./sq.ft. and 0.7 oz./sq.ft., respectively. An untreated check receiving a water drench immediately after petroleum treatment was also included for comparison purposes. During the study, bermudagrass was irrigated daily with 0.25 inch of water and received 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 sq.ft. throughout the growing season. Mowing was resumed 2 weeks after all treatments were applied.

Turf injury symptoms varied among the petroleum products:

Gasoline. Turf was shiny, slightly oily and had a pungent smell immediately after treatment. Within 30 minutes, bermudagrass plants were drying rapidly, had rolled leaves and were darker than plants in the untreated check. Leaf rolling was considered severe after 1 hour and the turf was completely brown after 16 hours.

Motor oil. For the first 16 hours after treatment, turf was oily and appeared shiny. A few leaves were rolled. Leaf browning occurred after 20 hours and after 48 hours, 50% of the aerial shoots were killed and the turf still appeared to be oily.

Hydraulic fluid. Although leaves did not die as rapidly, the initial injury symptoms following the hydraulic oil application were very similar to those of gasoline. Turf developed a dark brown color after 16 hours; however several leaves and stems remained green.

Brake fluid. Initially, turf treated with brake fluid had a characteristic odor, and leaves appeared shiny for about 30 minutes before beginning to roll, darken and dry. Leaf roll was considered extensive after 16 hours and turf was pale grayish-green. All aerial shoots were dead after 48 hours.

Grease. Although no distinct injury symptoms appeared during the first 16 hours after treatment, grease remained visible on the surface of leaves. After 48 hours, about 30% of the aerial shoots had died and grease was still visible on many leaves.

The rate of recovery of bermudagrass following corrective treatments also varied.

Gasoline. None of the corrective treatments following the intentional gasoline "spill" improved the rate of recovery of bermudagrass which was totally recovered within 4 weeks.

Motor oil. Detergent proved to be the most effective corrective treatment following the motor oil application. Bermudagrass treated with detergent reached 85% recovery by 4 weeks and 95% by 8 weeks after spill. Bermudagrass treated with either activated charcoal or calcined clay had achieved only 30% recovery by 8 weeks after spill.

Hydraulic fluid. Detergent was an effective treatment following the hydraulic fluid spill, with bermudagrass recovery reaching 90% within 4 weeks. Activated charcoal and calcined clay were much less effective post-spill treatments. Bermudagrass recovery after 4 weeks was 25% following the activated charcoal treatment and 15% following the application of calcined clay. After 8 weeks, bermudagrass recovery following the application of either activated charcoal or calcined clay was only 50%, just slightly better than the 45% recovery rate of untreated, water-drenched bermudagrass.

Brake fluid. Since the brake fluid was relatively water soluble, bermudagrass in the untreated, water-drenched plots totally recovered within 4 weeks. Bermudagrass in plots treated with detergent totally recovered within 3 weeks.

Grease. Bermudagrass required 10 weeks to fully recover following the grease application regardless of the corrective treatment.

By knowing what injury symptoms look and perhaps, smell like, and what corrective action to take immediately following a petroleum leak or spill will help protect the environment and may speed turfgrass recovery. ■

Tom Samples, John Sorochan and Adam Thoms, Plant Sciences Department, and William Hart, Biosystems Engineering and Soil Science Department.

▲ **IF THERE IS WATER NEARBY**, be aware. This is a poisonous cottonmouth!

REALITY TURF:
one veteran's take on safety

I REMEMBER SITTING IN DR. CHING-WAY SUN'S WOOD TECH LAB in front of a pile of wood blocks. The task was to learn how to identify them, along with 100 more yet to come. I probably looked like a monkey working on a trig problem. Then Professor Steinhielb walked in; no sweater vest and polished shoes and khaki's for "the Hammer." It was flannel, jeans and logging boots. He picked up my utility knife and with the second effort he had a piece whittled off. He took a sniff, then bit the block of wood. Handed me the block and said it "smelled like oat straw, tasted like the oats when the horse got done and don't cut [. . .] either. Must be chestnut." To this day I can pick out chestnut furniture across a room. His language was simple and direct and extremely effective communication.

Good communication is important for workplace safety, especially when giving directions for safe operation of a piece of equipment, a phone call to emergency services, or simple day to day things. The key to communication is giving information to your target audience in a manner they will understand and (hopefully) retain.

A good start would be to rehearse making an emergency call so that emergency services will learn the who, what, where, when, and other pieces of important data from your facility. Make a practice call to your services and ask them what they will need from you in an emergency.

Safety is a pretty nebulous term that means different things to different people. Here are some of the oddball situations I've encountered; these things either did happen or easily could have; I had never thought of any of them though until they happened.

HOW FAST DOES A PADLOCK FLY?

We all pretty much know how far and fast a baseball will travel. But what about a padlock from an equipment bag lying on

The American Red Cross and the American Heart Association

These two organizations are great resources for information on emergency situations. The Red Cross offers classes in first aid and water safety. The Heart Association is good for the CPR and AED. Does your facility have one? Do your fellow employees know how to use it on you?

If you have never taken a first aid course or CPR course you should. There is no end to the uses that arise in every day living that come up both at work and home. The water safety courses will give you ideas on how to prevent accidents. You will take away a new sense of awareness. Safety should be grown and nurtured into your everyday life. It should become part of your work culture.

the grass? Wonder how far it'll fly? Do your operators understand their safety responsibilities and procedures when they turn on the key? It's simple but most safety is simple.

When you are being "innovative" and come up with a contraption to move soccer goals, think twice and then ask the manufacturer. Sure a cradle makes life simple and easy and a tractor can do the heavy lifting. But do you realize that a goal's crossbar wasn't engineered to hold up the side posts? The posts were made to hold up the crossbar. The bouncing of moving a suspended goal is likely to stress the joints that could cause failure, which can lead to real tragedy. Treat the equipment properly and be very careful if you alter the intended use or disregard manufacturers' recommendations.

Lightning is one we all have to deal with. My advice is, don't manually sound the all clear! Like pilots are taught, trust your instruments. If the sensors are still sensing the ion differential that is conducive to lightening, believe it. The term "out of the blue" ring a bell? The genius who asks you to manually override obviously has never been struck on a sunny day 30 minutes after the storm appeared to have passed.

SERVICE ANIMAL TEST

Considering allowing pets at your facility? An "only service animals" policy is a good idea. There is a series available of proper questions to ask of an owner of a qualifying service animal. The owners usually are trained for these questions. If they aren't, I say it's a pet. When contracting for use, detail penalties for groups that don't abide the no-pet policy. Be creative and forceful. If a violation of pets occurs and the parents are aware that their actions may cause a forfeit they usually respond in a proper fashion.

The state of Illinois recently passed a concealed carry gun law. Be aware of what your state allows. I took a concealed carry class several years ago and I don't even own a hand gun. But I learned that if a facility is posted, you can't carry in that location. Remember, by law you have to post if you spray pesticides. I suggest that you post your facility for guns. You may ask, "Really?" and I'd reply you bet. We have all seen the news reports of sporting events ending violently. Check your local laws and consider going gun-free.

ROAD OF GOOD INTENTIONS

The road of good intentions, which we all know doesn't always go where we intended it to point it. There is a term "false knowledge." We may think we know what we are doing but if we are honest with ourselves we probably will recognize we really don't. That is when we should look to professionals in the area that we are considering treading.

Fencing is a good example. One facility I know had an appealing split rail fence when built and the board decided to add more, even after they had been asked to put a cable through the fence to

1. There is more than checking to see if your equipment is secure so it won't tip. A bolt falling out from the bouncing on a cradle can have the same result as tipping. **2.** This was found 100 feet away up a hill next to the drive through. **3.** Was a crew member well trained or just handed the keys? **4.** A not-so-average cat track compared to a penny. **5.** When doing routine maintenance, are they aware of why this is potentially lethal when practice starts?

keep balls from rolling under it. Balls continued to bounce through as they always had.

Here's another fencing story: Dad has just finished with Little Billy on field 3. Big sister Sally has a game starting in 10 minutes on field 10. If they take the straight route after picking up a latte at the concession stand, they will be there before kickoff. Little Billy grabs the top rail and is up and over the fence. Dad, no longer at his high school playing weight, grabs the top rail with one hand right in the middle between the posts. When he pushes down on the lower rail and throws that leg up, augmenting the downward force, it's only to be expected the weakest part fails. That would be the middle. Dad goes down, planting his chin on his latte; luckily he only lost the latte and no teeth.

So don't get caught up with false knowledge. You might create more issues than you solve unless you know what you are doing.

Natural areas attract natural things. For example, coyotes are extremely adaptable, to the point they moved into Wrigleyville, on the North Side of Chicago and home to the Cubs. Several years ago a mountain lion was shot across the street from a Chicago school; it had migrated from South Dakota. And natural areas can also attract poisonous weeds, snakes and other undesirables.

Safety means focusing every day about how things are done in and around your facility. Find the unusual situation before it becomes an accident. And remember that developing a safe work culture and environment takes everyone's work and focus. Be ready for the possibility that something unusual might happen.

Good management will recognize good safety practices need to constantly change. Good safety practices also easily translate to good risk management policy. If you ignore safety issues it's a matter of time before some costly event occurs. ■

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"There's a storm brewing!" Are you ready?

Mark Twain said, "Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get." This statement stills holds true today. Weather affects sports turf mangers livelihood weekly, daily and sometimes hourly. How many times have you thought over and over about the weather? Is global warming alive and well? Could it be true? Who knows? Let the meteorologists and environmentalists argue that point and case. This is what we do know, with the recent tornado events from May and June 2013 in Oklahoma, about 40 people have lost their lives; that's worrisome enough. However, looking back at 2012, I was taken back on how much the weather has impacted our livelihood in such big ways. From California and the Dakotas and east to Indiana and Illinois, at least 123 deaths were associated with excess heat and $35 billion primarily in crop losses were a result from record drought.

The western wildfires that burned over 9 million acres across the United States resulted in eight deaths and cost over $908 million in damages. Super Storm Sandy and Hurricane Isaac contributed to 182 deaths and cost more than $64 billion.

The term Derecho refers to fast moving storms that are long-lived and wide-spread wind storms that can exceed hurricane force winds typical of most hurricanes. Last year when this type of weather system went through the Midwest to the Mid-Atlantic, it was responsible for more than 20 deaths and millions of dollars in property damage.

Last but not least, there were 939 tornadoes last year which cause 70 deaths and over 1.6 billion dollars in property and crop loss.

These facts are stunning and a little bit scary, but how can we prepare ourselves from such mayhem. Being prepared is only half the battle; predicting the unpredictable is the second half. To start you need to develop a plan, a checklist, for every department of your facility. You also need to conduct round-table discussions with appropriate representation from critical areas such as: the general manager, security, the sports turf manger, the housekeeping manger, public relations, human resources, IT, local fire and police departments etc.

Planning: (Before the Storm-Checklist)

- Resource management: Make sure you have enough staffing and contractors to maintain all shifts with places for them to rest in case long hours are needed.
- Fleet Management: Make sure your vehicle fleet is gassed up with extra gas and properly stored in case of power failure that could put your gas tanks out of service.
- Back up Power: Make sure all generators are filled with fuel and are working properly.
- Flying Debris: Make sure all tables and chairs or any other loose items are put away or tied down.

HTTP://WWW.READY.GOV/BUSINESS
Your headquarters for a storm event or also known as an Incident Command System (ICS) is used by public agencies all the time.

• Emergency Response: Have a safety program in place during and after the storm for trafficking pedestrian sidewalks and roadways blocked from debris and falling trees.

• Trafficking: Develop outbound evacuation routes and emergency vehicles routes inbound and outbound. Have areas for airlifts, if necessary and/or feasible.

• Crisis Communications: Have a form of communication like cell phones or UHF or VHF two-way radios etc.

• Conduct a Business Impact Analysis (BIA): Areas to consider are payroll, equipment rentals, food, water, etc.

• Information Technology: One of the most important people to have at your round table discussion is IT. Having a plan in place in case of power loss and know what areas are critical for fully operational systems in case servers go down are crucial to your storm readiness plan.

• Incident Management Training: Like anything, practice makes perfect, but it is hard to plan for the unknown, so use all types of scenarios with your plan and grade them on effectiveness and failures to make your team better prepared. Use exercise results to evaluate the overall effectiveness of your plan.

DURING THE STORM HTTP://WWW.READY.GOV/BUSINESS

Your headquarters for a storm event or also known as an Incident Command System (ICS) is used by public agencies all the time. This system is also effective in these instances and is starting to be used widely in the private sector. At the very least it may not be a bad idea to be familiarizing yourself and your team with its protocols. Not all weather events require activating the ICS; just those that meet the guidelines established by your administration. ICS Checklist:

• Point of Contact (POC) or person in charge of operation.

• Assess the situation and let POC know if first responders are needed.

• In case of emergency, the appointed internal emergency team is in charge of areas until first responders show up.

• Notify or verify internal teams, departments, public agencies, regulators, contractors and suppliers have been notified and are on standby.

• Appoint others to incident command positions as needed.

• Brief staff on current organization protocol and on events as they unfold.

• Terminate the response and demobilize resources when the situation has been stabilized and safe for reentry.

• Identify and assess hazardous situations and high risk areas until all areas have been cleared internally and/or externally.

AFTER THE STORM (ASSESSMENT-CHECKLIST)

After the storm passes, assess your damages and log all your property and equipment damages with your facility. Also, log all the man hours it takes to clean up the debris and water damage from the storm. If your governor declares a state of emergency and it is signed by the President, then you may be considered for some relief from FEMA; however, you need to have your ducks in row.

• Manage all financial aspects of the incident.

• Provide financial and cost analysis information, as requested.

• Create accounts for claims and costs; coordinate with logistics.

• Track worker time and costs for materials and supplies.

• Document claims for damage, liability and injuries.

• Notify risk management/insurance to initiate claims reporting.

• Provide incurred and forecasted costs at planning meetings.

• Provide oversight of financial expenditures, new leases, contracts and assistance agreements to comply with corporate governance.

Public Relations checklist: Only state facts that are cleared through upper management and ISC. Develop brief information for use in media briefings. Monitor and forward useful information to the media.

FINANCIAL AID STEPS (CHECKLIST)

Your sports complex could be reimbursed by FEMA for labor, equipment rental, property damage etc. Here are the ten protocol

steps by FEMA for you to follow to help increase the chances of eligibility for financial aid reimbursement.

(http://www.fema.gov/pdf/government/grant/pa/fema323_app_handbk.pdf)

1. The governor of your state requests federal assistance.
2. Federal and state governments collect information on the extent of damages and put together a damage assessment report.
3. The President signs off for state of emergency or disaster relief funding.
4. Your local state will brief all applicants and work closely with you once approved.
5. FEMA and your local state representative will meet with meet with you and your administration for a kick off meeting.
6. The FEMA staff will work with you on projects and estimating cost.
7. Your local and state appointees and FEMA will evaluate all damage assessment cost.
8. FEMA will transfer funding to the state and you will work with state official to obtain funding.
9. After you obtain funding on any project, FEMA and your state will work with you until work is complete.
10. The final step is closing out your project along with FEMA and your local state official.

Precautions for Weather Patterns: The National Weather Service has learned over the past few years the predictability of certain types of weather patterns that could help you to forecast. This forecasting could help you to prepare for what items you may need or to add more contingences in your budget for events such as an extreme drought year or vice versa an extreme rainy year and snowy winter. I have looked up a lot of facts from the National Weather Service http://www.weather.gov/ and put together a list that might be a useful tool when forecasting your budget for your next fiscal year.

La- Niña is unusually drier conditions in the southwest of the United States that starts in late summer and actually continues through the winter. The Central Plains will have drier than normal conditions in the fall and in the Southeast, theirs will be start in the winter with warmer temperature than normal. On the opposite end of this spectrum the Pacific Northwest will encounter wetter conditions and cooler temperatures then normal and also with a well establish La-Niña you will have fewer costal storms in the northeast, but more Alberta Clippers with more milder and warmer temperature then normal. I would caution; however, La Niña typically brings more hurricanes to the Atlantic coast and less to the Pacific coast.

EL-Niño typically brings drought conditions through the northwest to the northeast of the United States. The winters are very mild and above normal temperatures; however, extreme flooding could hit the Gulf States in the winter months.

Pineapple Express typically causes wide-spread flooding, strong winds to the Pacific coast and heavy snow accumulations to northwest.

Siberian Express typically brings polar air from the Siberian and across Western Canada in a southward trend to the central, northeastern and sometimes the southeastern part of the United States. This weather front will bring extreme cold weather temperatures that could linger for days and even weeks.

Mother Nature will always be unpredictable and will always have the last word. All of us who have been in the business long enough already knows this; however, planning for severe weather events to saves lives, property and equipment should be on everyone's radar. Having a plan in place and the resources ready in case of a catastrophic weather event happens at your sports field complex can heighten your readiness and professionalism for your employer and even more importantly to your community. I hope you will never have to go through any severe weather event. I know our jobs can be difficult enough without Mother Nature barring down her wrath on us. No matter if you have a simple plan or a complex plan, it still boils down to one thing, it's a plan and planning is always good. Sometimes a community event as simple as a ball game could bring back a sense of normalcy and help in the healing process to your community. I think at times we can do more for our community then we may even realize. ■

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