



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 Steinhilb 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 di-

rections 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

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

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

Save up to 80%
on top services
and products
for your business

See our deals and save
greenmediaonline.rapidbuyr.com/deal

Leverage the buying power of millions of businesses



green media deals

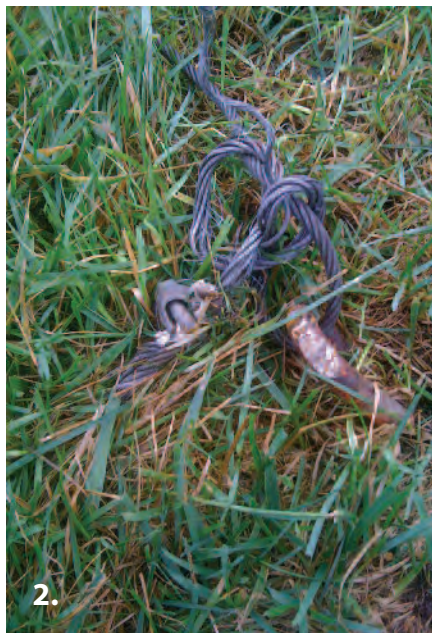
Landscape
IRRIGATION

ARBORCARE

SportsTurf

POWERED BY
OPE

Powered by
RAPID BUYR



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. ■

David Schwandt, former superintendent of a 115-acre soccer complex, currently resides in Libertyville, IL and is a member of the STMA Editorial Committee.