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The Andersons



38

Gulf location, drought challenge crew in Corpus Christi

In 2009, the area went through its worst drought since 1917 and saw average temperatures 4 degrees above normal. Reddehase says they received only 3 ¼ inches of rain from January to August, and half of that came in 1 day.

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Overseeding blues?

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Whataburger Field, home of the Corpus Christi Hooks, AA affiliate of the Houston Astros, was awarded the Sports Turf Managers Association's 2009 Professional Baseball Field of the Year Award.

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From the Sidelines



Eric Schroder
Editor

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Coaches: a fact of life

Jesse Pritchard, CSFM, University of Virginia emailed me this response in mid-February regarding an article for next month:

"I would call the weather situation we are in here [UVA] a crisis. The Mid-Atlantic region has received record amounts of snowfall this winter . . . It has been an interesting process explaining to both our head baseball and softball coaches that their opening games are in serious jeopardy of being canceled due to the snow.

"Coaches have different personalities, and these two are no different. Our baseball coach is adamant about playing on the field to the point where it's nearly play at all costs. I understand this and have to steer him in the direction that will help him play as soon as possible and save the integrity of playing surface at the same time; this is usually a huge compromise on his part. Our softball coach wants to get on the field as early as possible but understands the investment athletics has made in her field and wants to do nothing to damage it.

"I need to use thoughtful communication and pull from a background of trust that I have developed with my coaches to make them comfortable with how the field crew will make their fields playable. The relationships I have developed with our coaches go a long way in determining how green the grass appears and how true the ball bounces!"

This arrived shortly after I had also swapped emails with University of Oregon women's soccer head coach Tara Erickson, about her perspective of working with her turf manager:

What are your expectations as a coach regarding playability and availability of your practice and game fields?

"Here at the University of Oregon we are fortunate to have an exceptional game and practice field for our use during our fall competitive season. Our field is so well maintained that we are able to practice and compete on the field daily with very limited wear and tear. We would hope that no amount of weather or wear would force us to alter our game or practice plans . . . even though we live in the rainy Northwest!"

What works best for you in terms of communicating with your turf manager?

"As a coach you always take pride in being a good communicator, but so often we are stretched thin with various daily commitments, so a ground manager that actively seeks us out is ideal. This doesn't have to be everyday but as frequently as possible."

How disruptive is it when coaches are asked to vary practice routines to protect turf?

"As a coach this can be very detrimental to our overall goals for the practice. Because our game is played on the ground it can be extremely difficult to change fields, surfaces, etc."

What is your advice for other coaches with respect to dealing with turf managers and their concerns?

"I think the best approach is to be straight forward and communicate your goals and needs as a program. If our turf manager knows how important he/she is to these goals and needs most of the time we can work together. Every now and then we are told no or that plans need to change but at least if the communication is there we can move forward with a good approach."

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President's Message

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STMA members should be leaders

I recently was fortunate to attend leadership training through the Navy Week Leaders to Sea Program and witnessed true leadership in action. The aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis hosted us, and as you can imagine, nothing was left to chance. Every person on that carrier knew what was expected of him or her and flawlessly executed their job. As a team, they contributed to the mission of safe, accident-free landings and take-offs, and it was obvious that they all took ownership of that mission. With jet speeds of more than 1,360 miles per hour, there is no room for error.

STMA passionately believes in its mission: *To be the recognized leader in strengthening the sports turf industry and enhancing members' competence and acknowledgement of their professionalism.* The educational tools and resources that STMA has developed, and those that are planned for this year, are created specifically to help members do their jobs better. Like the military, sports turf managers are continually training to remain at the top of their game—planning, managing and executing effectively. It is that passion for being the best that brings recognition and respect for your work.

While on the USS John C. Stennis, I saw first-hand the importance of leadership. With strong leadership, sailors are prepared to support any mission without fail. Communicating what needs to be done is essential not only for the military, but for the success of any business.

As leaders at our facilities, we know that we must communicate our goals clearly and passionately to our crew. Through training, we ensure that our staff has the knowledge and skills to do good work. It is also our responsibility to motivate and empower them so that they personally succeed, and as a result our sports facilities succeed. As leaders, we have another responsibility: to communicate with our employers. We must have open communication with our employer. This dialogue helps to develop trust, which is most essential in building respectful and long-lasting employee-employer relationships.

As the leader in this profession, STMA needs to elevate its role in the environment. The vision that we share as a Board is for our profession to be recognized by the sports world, and ultimately the public at large, for our environmental stewardship. We are stewards of the environment, and now is the time to take a leadership role and make our commitment more visible. Like open communication with our employers, gaining recognition for our management practices that protect the environment will create greater trust in us. That trust will help us when communities are considering regulations that may impact our ability to provide safe and playable sports surfaces.

My experience aboard the USS John C. Stennis made me realize even more the unselfish contributions of our men and women in the military. To those members who have served our country, thank you, and to those members who have family members serving, thank you for your sacrifice. I know I place my trust in them.

Severe weather and lightning safety: What you don't know may shock you!



Weather is a critical component of a turf manager's daily responsibilities. When the weather is behaving, life is easy, when it doesn't, life can become very troubling, even dangerous.

Each year many people are killed or seriously injured by thunderstorms despite advanced warning. The following information is intended to help turf managers become more aware of the potential hazards associated with severe weather and to provide some guidelines for making storm-related safety decisions.

WHAT ABOUT THUNDERSTORMS?

Thunderstorms are relatively small in size averaging 15 miles or less in diameter, can form in minutes and last on average from 30 minutes to several hours. Despite their small size ALL thunderstorms are dangerous. On average, the United States experiences about 100,000 thunderstorms each year and 10% are classified as severe (1-inch hail, winds greater than 58 mph, or a tornado). Thunderstorms produce many hazards; we'll review three that can affect sports turf managers.

FLASH FLOODS AND FLOODS

- The #1 cause of deaths associated with thunderstorms.
- Most fatalities occur at night from victims who become trapped in automobiles.

- Six inches of fast-moving water can knock you off your feet; a depth of two feet will cause most vehicles to float.

Know the location of your facilities, its potential for flooding and the challenges associated with pedestrians and vehicles on your facility. Bottlenecks often occur when parents are dropping off and/or picking up athletes for regular events. Consider the increased traffic congestion with everyone moving in a panicked frame of mind.

TORNADOES

- 3rd most deadly hazard; can occur at any time of the year and in any state.
- In southern states, peak tornado occurrence is March through May, while northern states are during April through June.
- Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 and 9 p.m. but can occur at any time.

The best thing to do is to put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. A reinforced building can provide good shelter, but a basement provides a more substantial 'wall' for your protection.

Be sure to consider what it will take to move a large number of people into reinforced buildings in a relatively short period of time. Fortunately, lead-time warnings for tornadoes have improved and locating tornadic thunderstorms are a little more predictable than our next hazard, lightning.

LIGHTNING

Lightning is arguably the most dangerous severe weather hazard for sports turf managers. Lightning is the discharge of electrical energy built-up between positively and negatively charged areas. These discharges can move from cloud to cloud, cloud to ground or from ground to cloud.

- Lightning is the second most deadly thunderstorm hazard and the least predictable.
- Most lightning fatalities



**Lightning is a
random, chaotic and
dangerous fact of nature**

GO WITH THE LEADER



Safe and consistent surface conditions are easily reached with the GreensGroomer product line.

It all comes down to design simplicity and functional reliability. They're the guiding principles at GreensGroomer WorldWide. We focus on sensible design considerations that translate into products that work day-in and day-out.

Starting with the original GreensGroomer, we've built a product family that carries a reputation for quality workmanship. From steel fabrication and welding to the fit and finish, each piece we create carries this reputation with reliability.

Our products give you the right performance at the best possible balance of price and value.

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**Synthetic Sports Turf Groomer
& Spring Tine Rake**



The Synthetic Sports Turf Groomer and Spring Tine Rake allow fast, efficient, grooming of all infill synthetic sports fields. The Spring Tine Rake, attached to the Groomer, combs the infill, relieving compaction, releasing trapped turf fibers, and assuring a level playing surface.

**Spring Tine Rake
Rear Brush Attachment**



A valuable extension to the original Spring Tine Rake, the Rear Brush Attachment provides one-pass finish grooming and is fully adjustable to coincide with the brush wear on the Synthetic Sports Turf Groomer.

LitterKat[®]



A simple and effective design. The LitterKat is a debris collector with the right features, including, perforated baskets, on-board vibrators for sifting in-fill, handheld controls, and a tow-behind magnet — all in a lightweight aluminum construction.

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“When thunder roars, go indoors.”

and injuries occur in the summer months during the afternoon and evening.

- Lightning can strike 10 miles in advance or behind a travelling thunderstorm.
- Each spark of lightning can generate 100 million volts and 50,000° Fahrenheit temperatures.
- You CAN survive a lightning strike
- Lightning occurs in ALL thunderstorms.

One hundred percent of all lightning deaths in 2009 were of people caught outside. One out of five people were engaged in a sporting activity, while another one-fifth were killed seeking shelter during the thunderstorm. The National Weather Service recommends: **“When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors.”**

It is also important to obey the **30/30 Rule**: Go indoors if, after seeing lightning you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

This is an important rule to remember because gauging the distance of lightning can be misleading. At night, lightning is easy to see and can be spotted 50 to 100 miles away depending on conditions. During the day it is harder to spot initially and may be less than 5 miles away.

BEING PREPARED FOR SEVERE WEATHER

Being prepared means having a severe weather safety plan (see sidebar). The National Lightning Safety Institute (NLSI) has produced a framework for dealing with athletic event safety.

Once a plan is in place it is crucial that drills be conducted to ensure its success. Double-check that there is ample space for all people considered and that distances to the safety facilities match warning and evacuation lead times. Proper training and clearly defined procedures will help ensure success whenever severe weather threatens.

SOURCES FOR SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY INFORMATION:

National Lightning Safety Institute, www.lightningsafety.com includes Decision Tree for Personal Lightning Safety, Lightning Safety for Organized Athletic Events, and NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook Lightning Safety Guideline.

NOAA: National Weather Service - www.nws.noaa.gov/om/severeweather

NOAA: Storm Prediction Center - www.spc.noaa.gov/ ■

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