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ON COURSE



- PAGE 1 AN INSPECTOR CALLS**
- PAGE 2 WORK-BASED ASSESSORS**
- PAGE 3 NEWS IN BRIEF**
- PAGE 4 LEARNING MATERIALS**

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WHEN AN INSPECTOR CALLS

Alan Plom, Head of Safety Section in HSE's Agriculture & Food Sector helps reduce your stress by anticipating what an inspector will want to see and discuss. Alan coordinated HSE's input for the new "Health and Safety in Golf Course Management and Maintenance" publication.

The most common answer to the above question usually is "PANIC!".

The 'Inspector calling' will be from your local authority Environmental Health Department, unless you are managing a local authority owned course in which case the inspector will be from HSE. Even more worrying, it might be an advisor or assessor from your insurance company, which probably means that someone has reported an accident and is making a claim against you.

Alan describes a typical scenario: You have just sat down in your office with a cup of coffee expecting a quiet day to catch up with your paperwork, when "the Health and Safety Inspector turns up!" In a panic, you try to remember any accidents that might have prompted the visit.

Be advised. Inspectors will not be overly impressed by large volumes of risk assessments, detailed safety policies or method statements outlining safe systems of work etc. We really want to know if the control

measures identified in your risk assessment are being applied to reduce more significant risks. This is 'sensible health and safety'.

Good communications are vital and we will probe to see that all relevant staff (and managers!) know what they should be doing to protect themselves, players, contractors and others who might be exposed to hazards at the course. Everyone at work has a duty to protect themselves and others, but it's important they understand why actions are specified, i.e. not just because "it is the law" or "the manager says so". It's more effective if everyone is on-side and playing the (right) game. Involving staff and regularly updating your risk assessments is time well spent.

Inspectors can use a range of tools to achieve compliance, ranging from verbal advice and letters through to enforcement notices (requiring certain improvements or prohibiting particular activities) and, ultimately, prosecution. (Note: fines can be unlimited for more serious offences).

However, an accident to anyone can be very costly in other ways, i.e. to your club's reputation as well as your finances. You may need to hire or buy new equipment to replace damaged items, or employ contractors if one of your key workers is off at a vital time e.g. to prepare for a competition.

These days, Inspectors do not look at everything during an inspection or investigation but will 'test' your arrangements by focusing on those hazards and activities which cause most injuries, ill health and days lost off work. In greenkeeping these

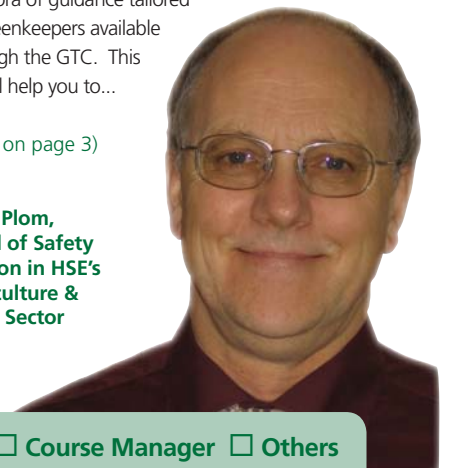
will include slips, trips and falls, transport and manual handling. However, we must not forget the well-known hazards from working with machinery and pesticides.

A quick look around will reveal much to an experienced eye, but there is a growing awareness of the risk of suffering from less-obvious hazards such as hand-arm or whole-body vibration from certain equipment commonly used in greenkeeping. Reports and claims for injury or ill health from excessive exposure to noise and vibration as well as hazardous substances are increasing. Inspectors and insurers will therefore be particularly interested in records of operator training, equipment use and maintenance, as these are all vital to ensure safe and efficient use.

Relevant (free) information is available on HSE's website to help you carry out assessments and produce suitable records, but you are very lucky in having advice and a plethora of guidance tailored to greenkeepers available through the GTC. This will all help you to...

(cont on page 3)

**Alan Plom,
Head of Safety
Section in HSE's
Agriculture &
Food Sector**



CIRCULATION CHECKLIST Secretary Chairman of Green/Green Convenor Course Manager Others

The Role of the Work-based Assessor

David Golding, GTC's Education Director, has invited Alistair Fraser, a lead verifier from one of the British Awarding Bodies, the NPTC, part of the City & Guilds Group, to explain how Vocational Qualifications are viewed.

The GTC is currently heavily involved both in the apprenticeship review and the development of the British Vocational Qualifications to fit into the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) so it is clear that on-the-job training and qualifications are going to be in demand throughout the countries in the European Union and beyond.

For golf club employers it is a message that a skilled workforce is more often than not the result of understanding the modern system of training in which Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers are key individuals in the VQ process.

Approved centres and training providers are far more flexible with their delivery methods both to support the VQ system and the vocationally related highly acclaimed Higher Education qualifications such as the HNC/D and Foundation Degree.

Alistair Fraser is a Lead Verifier for the NPTC and with his turf background has a great passion for the sports turf sector, he comments:

"In order for an NVQ programme to be most effective and efficient, it is essential that centres fully involve the Work-Based assessor. The GTC has trained numerous Work-Based assessors who are largely under-used and at times under-valued.

"The Work-Based Assessor is frequently the candidate's line manager and is the best person to validate whether or not the candidate is competent in meeting the standards prescribed by the NVQ (SVQ in Scotland)."

He continues, "Many candidates are certificated where the majority of the evidence has been assessed by the centre's visiting assessor. This is a huge lost opportunity, as the ethos of an NSVQ is to collect naturally occurring evidence in the workplace. It is particularly valuable as it testifies to the candidate's own performance in the workplace. The evidence can include: observations, candidate's statements, witness testimonies, photographs and product (for example, mown greens).

"The most cost effective and naturally

occurring method of assessment on a golf course has to be observation since often the assessor is working alongside the candidate.

"Where the workplace has a qualified assessor then that evidence must be assessed by them as to whether it meets the standards. As a consequence the role of the centre should be solely involved with internal verification and auditing and supporting the workplace assessor. The evidence that contributes to the candidate's portfolio is gathered and assessed solely in the workplace and by their workplace assessor." He added.

A frequently asked question in the implementation of this process is "How do we standardise the assessment team when they are spread over a wide geographical area, the assessors have work commitments and do not turn up for meetings, standardisation sessions etc?" Standardisation may take many forms. In the case of widespread assessors, standardisation can be carried out remotely with the internal verifier photocopying assessment evidence and forwarding it to the Work-Based assessors to comment on validity and then the internal verifier can provide feedback on issues.

As to involving the assessor team in meetings, the availability of modern electrical

communication systems such as video conferencing and telephone conferencing lends itself to these situations.

Where the ethos of work-based assessment is implemented fully within other industrial sectors, candidates complete the award in far more economic timescales. This is surely a major advantage to all those concerned i.e. candidate, employer, centre.

Alistair continues, "Occasionally a candidate has to wait for weeks (in some cases months) for an assessor to visit and assess them mowing a green, when their line manager/assessor has observed them competently carry out the process many times. As stated earlier "Who is the best person to judge that candidate's competence?" Let's make the assessment process work in the way it was designed almost twenty years ago.

"The NPTC will continue to work with organisations like the GTC who are totally 100% behind a quality range of qualifications for the sector they represent and a strong Awarding Body – industry partnership should result in an efficient and effective centre – verification – assessor – learner system."

"Watch this space..."



'Another on the job assessment completed successfully!'

Continued from Page 1

ensure you have in place all that is deemed reasonable to ensure a safe working and playing environment for your staff and golfers.

David Golding GTC's Education Director adds: "It has been a pleasure to work with Alan Plom from the HSE as he is a real practical man with a sense of reality when it comes to health and safety matters. A health and safety wall chart is also available via the GTC website. Another useful tool is the BIGGA/GCMA Safety

Management System (SMS) also available via the GTC, BIGGA, and GCMA websites.

Please take advantage of the "tools" the GTC have made available to you, the employers and greenkeepers, to make the golf course and the workplace as safe as is practically possible."

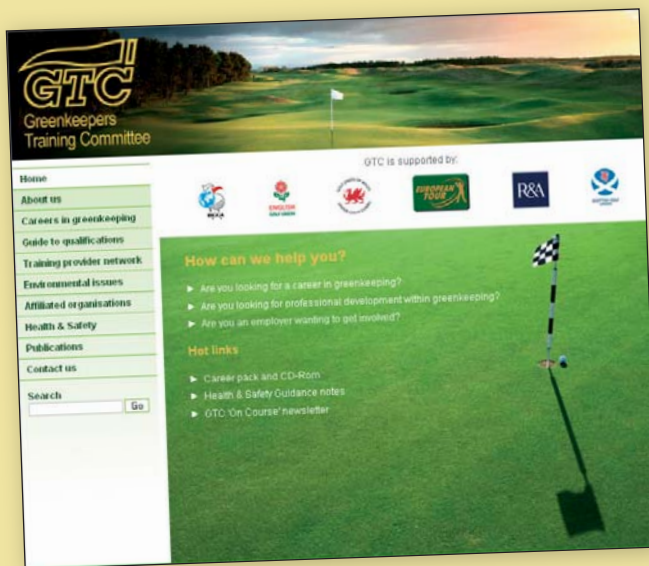
"Health and Safety in Golf Course Management and Maintenance" is available as a download free or a snip at £20 in hardcopy via the GTC website – www.the-gtc.co.uk

Alternatively please visit the health and safety government website at www.hse.gov.uk



News in Brief

Have you seen the new GTC website yet?



Earlier this year, the GTC launched its brand new website. The new look site now offers a completely new structure with up-to-date features, such as an innovative navigation system and downloads. Log on to find out anything from careers in greenkeeping to environmental issues.

Employers and employees can also access all the latest guidance from the new Health and Safety booklet which is available to download for free or buy as a hardcopy for only £20 at www.the-gtc.co.uk

Sign up now for the NEW GTC e-alerts service

The GTC is offering a new e-mail service to keep you up-to-date on all matters relating to greenkeeper education, training and qualifications. David Golding, GTC's Education Director, explains more about the e-mail alerts service and what they will offer to the greenkeeping sector.

"Very often information comes into the GTC office which I immediately feel needs disseminating

to the greenkeeping sector.

"The GTC's work with Regulatory, Awarding bodies and the Lantra Sector Skills Council often involves a consultation process to ensure we can truly represent golf club employers and greenkeepers when in discussions to review qualifications and schemes, such as the Apprenticeship and the Qualification and Credit Framework.

"The alerts service will allow

for wider consultation with the sector including the GTC Approved Centres, who are very much key partners in the education and training of greenkeepers."

If you are a greenkeeper, golf club owner, committee member, golfer or just a "friend" of greenkeeping please visit the GTC website at www.the-gtc.co.uk to register for the new service.

ACCESS ALL ROUTES TO THE GTC LEARNING MATERIALS

David Golding, the GTC's Education Director, reminds Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers that their role as work-based trainers can be supported by the use of best practice Learning Materials.

The GTC's learning materials, written by sector specialists and used by turf tutors throughout the Approved Training Provider network are now being made available in a new format.

The hard copies of the Level 2 and Level 3 learning materials have fast become the latest essential reading in many golf maintenance facilities and not only for greenkeepers registered on the National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications Level 2 and 3. We hear that many experienced Course Managers are also using the materials as reference books when they have learners to assess.

The materials are available in CD Rom format and now the latest option for learners is to purchase a chapter by chapter in a pdf download direct from the GTC website (at a very reasonable cost).

Some learners prefer to read from a book others are quite comfortable in reading from a screen and the GTC is pleased to give access to both styles of learning. We do not intend to stop at these options explains David Golding GTC's Education Director.

"The GTC in association with the Virtual College are now looking at adding quizzes and self-assessment opportunities using the learning materials as the best practices for greenkeeping. A demonstration of e-learning was produced for the BIGGA Harrogate Week exhibition and over 50 visitors to the GTC stand agreed to take part in the trial.

David adds, "there was tremendous support for the GTC's latest initiative both from individual learners and the college representatives. Ongoing discussions with the Virtual College following feedback from

the demo trial will hopefully see the learning options extended by the GTC in the near future and we are always looking to give greenkeepers the opportunity to learn and develop through a variety of opportunities." The GTC Training Provider network does a tremendous amount of work to offer qualifications through a variety of delivery options and it's only right that the GTC supports them with the best practice learning materials.

All of the GTC's initiatives are developed with the full support and knowledge of its Approved Training Provider Centres.

For all the latest information check out the GTC website www.the-gtc.co.uk

