



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

AMERICAN SOD PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

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JUNE / JULY 1987

LETTER BLITZ BY ASPA MEMBERS BRINGS ATTENTION TO SOD NEEDS

Acting Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Economics to the United States Department of Agriculture...more commonly known as Al French to many ASPA members...now has much more to consider in his drafting of definitions concerning perishable commodities.

As a result of a call to action by ASPA, seeking inclusion of sod in the Department of Ag's definition of "perishable commodities," Mr. French received letters from at least 53 different ASPA members. Each of the letters spoke to the needs of sod producers for seasonal labor and the extremely critical loss which could be faced if such labor was not available.

Mr. French, formerly with the Florida Farm Bureau, noted his admiration for ASPA's ability to generate such an impressive number of letters within the extremely short period given for comment. He suggested he would have liked to have done as well on some issues when he was in Florida!

In total, ASPA received carbon copies from 62 companies who had sent 53 letter to Mr. French, 54 to Congressmen, 83 to Senators, 19 to Ag. Secretary Lyng and six to others such as state ag departments and governors.

WE'RE STILL AWAITING THE FINAL RELEASE OF THE RULES AND
WON'T KNOW UNTIL THEN IF THIS EFFORT WAS SUCCESSFUL. WE DO
KNOW ONE THING FOR CERTAIN THOUGH...ASPA MEMBERS CAN BE
COUNTED ON TO DO THE RIGHT THING AND STAND TOGETHER ON AN
ISSUE WHEN IT COUNTS! BE PROUD OF WHAT YOU EACH DID.

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'BELT' YOUR PROFITS

Insisting that all employees use safety belts whenever and wherever they're available makes good business sense according to the US Department of Transportation. In a new safety awareness/instruction program, DOT personnel report, "hidden costs" such as supervisor's time, rescheduling, overtime pay, temporary and/or permanent replacement and administrative costs, may be ten times the known costs of lost wages, medical expenses, rehab programs, property losses, etc.

Some personal factors to consider about seatbelts:

****Everyone can expect to be in a motor vehicle crash once every 10 years.**

****Three out of four crashes happen within 25 miles of home.**

****Eighty percent of serious injuries and deaths occur in cars traveling 40 miles an hour or less.**

****The chances of fatal injury are 25 times greater if you are thrown out of a vehicle than if you were protected by a safety belt.**

****Less than one-half of one percent of all injury-producing collisions involve fire or submersion and occupants are far more likely to remain conscious and able to free themselves if they are belted in.**

Consider these few points about your firm and your employees:

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 1 and 34...probably the majority of your employees are under age 34.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of lost worktime and on-the-job worker deaths.

American employers pay for about 45 million days of lost time each year because of motor vehicle crashes.

Contact your state highway safety office for more information on how to establish a program for your firm.

'STATS LINE' GIVES YOU BUSINESS FIGURES IN BRIEF

Updated and operated by the US Library of Congress, a recorded telephone information service called "Stats Line" will give you a very brief summary on each of the following areas: Consumer Price Index; Federal deficit; Gross National Product; Housing starts; Prime rate; Public debt; Unemployment; and, the U.S. merchandise trade balance.

Calling 202/287-7034 will give you a recorded message of all items. The call is billed to the caller's phone at current rates. There is no additional charge for the service other than time charges.

SPECIAL_INSERT_TO_JUNE/JULY_BUSINESS_MANAGEMENT_NEWSLETTER

USDA SAYS SOD IS NOT PERISHABLE

June_1_final_rule_specifically_excludes_sod,
Members must comply with stringent aspects of IRCA

Turfgrass sod is not a "perishable commodity" according to the US Department of Agriculture in preparing its definitions for implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). This means that members must comply with all aspects of the law, including the more stringent legalization requirements for any workers who now identify themselves as illegal aliens.

Al French, Special Assistant in Economics for the USDA, said all of the letters and Congressional interest developed by ASPA were important and demonstrated a concern across the U.S. Because of the interest, he assigned a special research person to the question, with a report being presented to a panel consisting of a variety of disciplines and levels of expertise. According to French, no one on the panel voted in favor of defining turfgrass sod as a perishable commodity, noting it failed to meet the requirements for "unpredictable and critical labor demands."

"USA Today" newspaper reporter Desda Moss informed ASPA of the final ruling four days before it was officially published, noting that turfgrass sod was specifically excluded from the items defined as "perishable commodities." French confirmed the ruling when contacted by telephone.

ACTIONS_TO_TAKE_NOW:

The battle may have been lost, but a war is raging, a war to ensure there will be sufficient and affordable laborers for turfgrass sod farms. Please consider the following:

#1. Send thank you letters to all Congressional delegates you wrote to. Express your appreciation for their support on this issue and suggest to them their help may be needed in the future, if affordable laborers in sufficient numbers cannot be obtained.

#2. Follow IRCA implementation developments in your local newspaper. Because changes are occurring so rapidly, no better means is available to keep informed of changes that could or will affect your operation. The law and its impact on you could be great. All aspects must be complied with, including the completion of the I-9 form by any new employees.

#3. Plan your labor needs carefully and well in advance of projected need. You should anticipate a less available, more expensive labor force as the current in-country illegal aliens are accepted for amnesty and the controls on new entrants are tightened.

FORGET THE CAR, I'D RATHER HAVE A NEW LAWN THIS YEAR
GREEN THUMBS WITH GREENBACKS

Prepared by Randy Tischer, Chairman
ASPA Business Management Committee

What is America's favorite outdoor pastime...fishing, cycling, swimming, jogging? According to a recent Gallup Poll, the answer is none of these. The number one spot is held by gardening: the seasonal rite of lawn care, planting vegetables, pruning trees and raking leaves.

And with the money Americans are spending...more than \$12 Billion last year...it's not just a pastime, it's a blooming industry!

Who are these energetic gardeners and why are they popping up like bean sprouts? Traditionally, the majority were those over 50 years of age. Gallup's poll found, however, that the fastest growing segment of the gardening population is between 30 and 49, college educated, with incomes above \$20,000.

Over 60% of these homeowners believe an attractive yard will add dollars to the selling price of their home. They consider landscaping an investment as good or better than home improvements such as remodeling a kitchen.

Finally, let's not rule out the American love for gadgets, power equipment and the exotic. A #10 hoe and a package of marigold seeds won't cut it anymore. Hot selling items include: lawn tractors, underground drip irrigation systems, and rare or exotic looking plants.

While not exotic looking, an instantly mature, beautifully lush and useable turfgrass sod lawn should certainly fit into the pictures of most of these new gardeners...if only we begin to show them how we can help them fulfill their dreams!

(It's late, so here's a thought or two on working late...)

If you have to work late, keep yourself productive by remembering these simple concepts:

1. Decide what you can realistically accomplish. Ask yourself, "What do I really need to stay late for?"
2. Set definite time limits, and know you'll leave when the time comes. Work will expand to the time available if you let it.
3. Keep up your "after hours" motivation by maintaining a professional attitude. Don't relax and let something slip by "just because it's late."

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN PURCHASING
MICROCOMPUTER SOFTWARE

Provided by Dennis Marx, Partner
Ernst & Whinney - Chicago

The following listing of questions is designed to be of assistance when purchasing microcomputer software. Admittedly, the list is not exhaustive, but it will help you avoid several serious pitfalls:

- * Is the software easy for users to learn and use? How complete is the documentation? Does it make extensive use of examples? Does it include a tutorial? An index? A glossary?
- * Are the program's data capacity, speed and other capabilities adequate for your needs, not only now, but in the future?
- * How well is the program supported? Is there local support, or at least adequate telephone support available? Is support free, or is there a charge? Are future upgrades to the system free or available at a nominal cost?
- * How well does the package handle errors or other problem situations? Does it provide for automatic backup or key data?
- * Will the package work with your present hardware? Does it need a special display, additional memory, or a fixed disk? How easy it is to install?
- * Is the software copy protected? Can it be installed and run on a hard disk without the use of a "key disk"? If it is copy protected, are backup disks readily available?
- * Is the software compatible with other software that your company uses? Can you transfer data back and forth between the various programs?

The answers you receive to each of these questions should become an important part of your decision-making process. Any serious problems should be addressed at the pre-purchase stage and not when you are already the owner.

ASPA NEEDS ACTUAL CITY ORDINANCES AND OTHER SAMPLES OF LAWS OR BUILDING CODES THAT REQUIRE OR RESTRICT TURF-GRASS SOD USE.

TO CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE BACKGROUND LIBRARY OF GOOD AND BAD EXAMPLES, PLEASE SEND IN WHAT YOU HAVE, OR AT LEAST, TELL US WHERE IT CAN BE OBTAINED.