



## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

AMERICAN SOD PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

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### SAN DIEGO PRE-CON SEMINAR, PLANNED SUCCESSION --- Preparing for Tomorrow

Preparing for retirement and ownership by the next generation should be a lot easier for people attending ASPA's special Pre-Conference Seminar January 25 in San Diego.

Mike Henning, owner of the Henning Family Business Center, will examine and explain a number of important areas including selecting a successor, managing sibling relationships, why being 'equal or fair' is not always best, how to transfer ownership properly and control estate taxes. Because of the limited audience size, opportunities will abound to discuss items and interests of the registrants. The key focus of the session will be how to properly manage transition in a family-owned farm business.

Cost for the day-long seminar, including lunch, breaks and study materials will be \$75 for the first individual from a farm and \$50 for each additional person from that farm. Multi-generational farms are encouraged to enroll all of the principle individuals who would be concerned with ownership succession.

Additional information and registration forms will be sent to all ASPA members in the near future. Registration will be limited to ASPA member firms.



## FED. ADMINISTRATION REQUIRES INTERSTATE TRUCK MARKING

Effective November 15, 1988, all "self-propelled motor vehicles (generally straight trucks and truck tractors)," used in interstate commerce or as an interstate carrier of migrant workers must comply with new Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations regarding proper marking.

On both sides of the vehicle, and legible in daylight from 50 feet away, the vehicle markings must show the name of the operating motor carrier, the firm's principal place of business and the FHWA issued ID number, followed by the letters USDOT.

For more information and the necessary ID numbers, contact the FHWA Office of Motor Carrier Safety in your area.

## OSHA READIES 'COMPLIANCE KIT' FOR HAZARD COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has nearly completed a special "compliance kit" to help firms prepare the hazard communications program it now requires of all businesses dealing with such materials. It's highly likely that all sod farms would need to be in compliance because of the presence of such common items as gasoline and welding rods, not to mention fertilizers and pesticides.

The "kit" will be sold as a one-year subscription via the Government Printing Office. The \$18 price will include a basic manual and updates, as issued by OSHA. Orders may be placed with the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 20402-9371. Enclose payment of \$18 and request publication #929-022-00000-9. Final distribution dates have not been established, but are expected soon.

## LOW RESIDENTIAL BUILDING RATES PROJECTED TO CONTINUE INTO '89

With U.S. housing construction at its lowest rate since late 1982, projections call for the trend to continue.

F.W. Dodge Group officials report that, "Through the seven months of 1988, the unadjusted total of all newly started construction lagged last year's record total for the same period by 3 percent. Regionally, only the West has kept pace with '87 through the end of July, although contracting in the Northeast was still within 1% of last year's 7-month total. The North Central and the South trailed by 3% and 6% respectively.

"The outlook for residential building for the rest of '88 and most of '89 has taken a turn for the worse. It's a matter of lingering high vacancy rates for apartments and rising mortgage rates for singles," noted the Dodge economist.

## WHAT OBSTACLES DO OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE TO HURDLE?

Prepared by Ronald Nixon, Chairman  
ASPA Business Management Committee

What kind of business man would make it difficult for customers to do business with their company? Apparently some very successful ones, for I have seen obstacles in many different sod operations. Most of the time, they are unintentional, but sometimes obstacles are developed on purpose.

A customer may have to wait on his order until his credit application has been processed, or a customer with a poor credit history may have to bring a cashier's check. These are not bad obstacles, yet they are still obstacles customers have to face in doing business with most sod farms.

There are also obstacles we put up to make the farm-business run more smoothly, such as grouping sod orders of one variety together so the harvesting is more efficient, or moving deliveries so that the trucking works better. What about not accepting orders so that the planting can be done? These things are necessary for the farm-business to be successful, but they are seen by customers very differently than by you or me.

It seems to me that many obstacles are put in place because we view things from our perspective and not as a customer. We are very comfortable with our operations and may not easily see the obstacles that an outsider may encounter.

At our farm-business, there is a place where I park my vehicle. The employees park in a group out of the way. The truck drivers know where to load and park. But visitors keep parking in the wrong area, then walk in the wrong door and try to talk to people who cannot help them. It's not their fault, it's mine. I go to the farm daily and know what is behind every door before I open it. I am very comfortable at the farm and it feels very friendly to me. But, to someone who has not been there before, he feels awkward because there is no sign that says "Visitor Parking," there are two unmarked doors to choose from and all of the people look alike to him. Some of these things can and will be corrected.

I find our price list very easy to understand, since I made it, but our customers do not always understand it. I must admit that I find price lists from other turfgrass farms very confusing, from the wooden pallet deposit, to the delivery charge, to the unloading charge and the extra drop charge. It is hard to figure out what the turfgrass sod is going to cost.

As the sod industry matures and competition increases, we do not need to be building any more obstacles than are necessary. The customer's view of a turfgrass purchase will be very different than the sod farmers. It may be necessary to have someone outside the farm-business identify our obstacles. Buying a truck load of turfgrass sod should be a pleasant experience everyone can enjoy. Isn't part of our job to see that that happens?



'PERISHABLE COMMODITY' ROUND 2 DECISION GOES TO ASPA!...  
...ROUND 3 TO BE DECISIVE

Finding that the Ag Department (USDA) did act in an arbitrary and capricious manner, Federal District Court Magistrate Mahoney has ordered the USDA to reopen the matter and the INS to accept applications for legalization from sod farm workers.

Specifically, in his 21-page finding, Magistrate Mahoney directed the USDA to issue a "Notice of Proposed Rule-making" no later than September 23, to allow at least 15 days of public comment and to issue a final ruling no later than October 28. ASPA was heavily involved in the lawsuit seeking sod's inclusion as a 'perishable commodity,' along with the Sod Growers Association of Mid-America, H&E Sod Nursery, Inc., and a group of sod farm workers.

As a result of the Court's decision, ASPA can now go before the USDA and demonstrate how sod clearly meets their requirements of a critical and unpredictable labor demand, as well as the other characteristics assigned to other horticultural specialties such as juvenile trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers, bulbs, corms and tubers. Because of the excellent representation received during the court proceedings, ASPA will continue to rely upon the representation of the Chicago law firm of Sanchez and Daniels. ASPA members may be called upon to assist in the preparation of materials to present to the USDA.

The battle to date has not been an easy or inexpensive one, but the potential loss is clearly greater. Therefore, ASPA will maintain its position and present the sod producers' case to the USDA. To assist in defraying the costs, a special fund has been established in conjunction with the Sod Growers Association of Mid-America. To date, over \$8,000 has been contributed by ASPA members. Please make a generous contribution today.

-----complete and mail today-----  
IMMIGRATION/PERISHABLE COMMODITY LEGAL FUND

My check, made payable to the SOD GROWERS ASSOCIATION OF MID-AMERICA, is enclosed to assist in the effort to define sod as a perishable commodity. I understand that this contribution will not be considered a tax deductible charitable contribution, but will be a business tax deduction for U.S. federal tax purposes.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Firm \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that all funds raised in this effort will be directed toward costs incurred in this matter and that should an excess of funds be generated, it will be contributed directly and specifically to the funding of ASPA Research.

Send to: ASPA, 1855-A Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008