

Turfgrass Producers International

“Farm Labor: What You Need to Know to Stay in Business” Focus of TPI’s Midwinter Pre-Conference Seminar

All employers, even if they only have one employee and have that employee on the payroll for just one hour, are required to follow all the rules and regulations established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). With guideline manuals over 700 pages long, confusion over the very important issue of farm labor standards is very high.

This is why “Farm Labor: What You Need to Know to Stay in Business” is the topic of TPI’s Midwinter Pre-Conference Seminar, to be conducted on **Wednesday, Feb. 8**. The seminar will be presented in a step by step, easy to follow format.

Conducting the seminar will be three farm labor experts:

* Monte Lake, TPI’s legal counsel and attorney for the Washington, D. C. law

firm of McGuiness and Williams, which specializes in employment, labor and immigration law;

* Sharon Hughes, Executive Vice President of the National Council of Agricultural Employers, which represents federal farm labor issues in both the legislative and regulatory arenas; and

* Stuart Longworth, Vice President of Human Resources for A. Duda & Sons Inc., executive committee member for the National Council of Agricultural Employers and co-chairman of the Farm Health Care Coalition.

The seminar will outline a broad range of topics, but will focus on four very important areas which include:

* **OSHA** - discussing the general statutory requirements plus posting, and reporting requirements;

* **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)**-featuring recordkeeping requirements, minimum wage and overtime rules and child labor laws;

* **EPA Worker Protection Standards** - highlighting pesticide use restrictions, training and label requirements, decontamination and emergency procedures;

* **Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act** - includes registration, disclosure, housing, health and motor vehicle safety requirements.

The pre-conference seminar runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., including a seminar luncheon. Midwinter Conference registration is not required.

For additional information contact the TPI office at 800/405-TURF.

PR SCORECARD

May 15 - Nov. 15 (the first 6 months)

Mailing to Media & Members

Total: 615,429 pages

Free Media Exposure:

publications	47*
circulation	2,816,000*
advertising value	\$97,900*

Paid Advertisements:

Landscape Architecture

circulation	40,000
advertising value	\$3,842

Landscape Architect & Specifier News

circulation	16,538
advertising value	\$1,046

1st-Aid Information

Requested & Mailed:

159 kits

*number only represents documented results that have been gathered by the TPI office or TPI members.

PR Program - Results of First Six Months 186% Return on Investment

In just six months, the new TPI public relations program has sent out over 600,000 pages of information to the media and TPI members, while receiving almost \$100,000 of free media exposure. This represents a 186% return on the membership’s special assesment. Keep in mind that these results are based only on actual media the TPI office has been able to document. With the PR mailing list having a base over 1400, this amount of recorded media exposure is very conservative.

With just the responses calculated from the first two advertisements placed in “Landscape Architecture” and “Landscape Architecture and Specifier News,” more than 100 landscape architects have requested more information and a listing of the turfgrass sod producers in their area.

Requests have had a very broad geographical distribution through much of the U.S. On top of this, more than 50 turfgrass kits have been requested by members of the media contacted through a recent newsrelease.

You can help these TPI media exposure numbers grow. The success of the program relies heavily on you, the member, to continue giving us the names of media with possible interests in the Turf Resource Center, reporting turfgrass information placed in the media, and sending in related turfgrass articles both positive and negative. The more information we receive the more valuable the services are going to be to you.

Stay tuned...for the next issue of *Business Management* to see the second PR Scorecard, so you can continue to track the success of your TPI PR program.

TPI PR Program Offers New Marketing Materials **Ads and Article Reprints are Effective Educators**

Putting attractive and solid information in your turfgrass sod customers' hands just became much easier, and very affordable, thanks to new materials resulting from TPI's public relations program.

Already in the young program's history, members can obtain reprints of two fact-filled articles from "Turf News" magazine and copies of the association's turf-promoting advertisement. More materials are expected as the program continues to develop.

"Turfgrass —First aid for the Earth," TPI's full-page, four-color advertisement which is appearing in "Landscape Architecture," and "Landscape Architect and Specifier News" magazines, illustrates the environmental benefits of turf through words and colorful photos. The reverse side of the ad is an ideal place for TPI members to present a message about their farm's products, services, personnel or any special information that will increase sales. The eye-catching design of the advertisement makes it an ideal piece for use in exhibit booths or as an on-farm, counter-top sales/information piece. Members may even want to distribute copies of their personalized version of

this ad to garden centers and nurseries where their turfgrass sod is sold on a retail basis. Making this piece the focal point of a direct mail effort should also prove highly effective.

For more technical and cost-oriented information, reprints of two articles from TPI's "Turf News" magazine may be exactly what is needed to close the big sale. Used as a second-party resource or a "case study," both the four-page article on roadside erosion control sodding (from the May/June issue) and the two-page article on sodding school play areas (from the Sept./Oct. issue) can be very effective in documenting cost-effectiveness when used in one-on-one sales calls or as documentation to enclose with direct mail sales efforts. By using these articles as support documents and actual examples, potential customers will no longer have to rely purely on the turfgrass sales person's ideas because both articles present actual cost figures. Local pricing and other site-specific considerations can easily be developed and incorporated into the presentation to increase the power of the information.

Orders for these items can be placed by calling the TPI office at 800/405-TURF. Costs for the ad reprint are \$15 for 100; \$60 for 500 or \$200 for 2000. The "Turf News" reprints will cost members \$10 for 10; \$19 for 25; \$30 for 50 or \$50 for 100.

As part of TPI's public relations and education program, the marketing sub-committee determined that a series of well designed and factually written articles and ad reprints would be most cost-effective for the organization and the members, especially as opposed to a single, expensive printed piece that would have only limited use. Additional reprints from "Turf News" will be announced in the magazine issue containing the original article.

Members are encouraged to share their use of any TPI marketing materials for the benefit of others. Please send TPI a sample of your personalized pieces, and/or examples of letters or marketing efforts you have undertaken that have proven successful for your firm.

Member Safety Tip

By Chris Hope, The Manderley Corp.
North Gower, Ontario, Canada

Noise Exposure

One of the safety concerns often overlooked on farm operations is one that cannot be seen - noise. During a visit by our farm safety association, I was surprised to learn that some of our field operations on tractors under 60 HP, were exposing operators to excessive noise levels (yes, even new tractors!).

The combination of long daily exposure with a sound level of over 90 decibels can lead to damaged hearing. The problem with noise is that its effects are very gradual and difficult to detect until it is too late.

There are two things that you can do to help eliminate future loss of hearing for your employees.

1. Make them aware of the problem. Unnecessary noise is easy to avoid. For example, keep the cab windows closed on larger tractors.

2. The other thing you can do is provide ear protection. Small disposable ear-plugs can be purchased in bulk and provided to employees for their use. The cost is negligible and you are raising everyone's consciousness of the problem.

Requirements Designated by OSHA:

* When information indicates that any employee's exposure equals or exceeds an 8-hour time frame averaging 85 decibels or more, the employer shall develop and implement a monitoring program.

OSHA requires employer's to inform all effected employees of the following:

- The effects of noise on hearing.
- The purpose of hearing protection and the advantages, disadvantages, use and care of the various types of protection.
- How to access information and training materials. i.e. individually distributing information and /or posting a copy in the workplace.

Taking Care Of Business

by Rob Stephens, Stephens Turf Farms, Little Rock, Arkansas

How Does the ADA Affect You?

July 26, 1994 was the day that 400,000 more businesses in the U.S. came under the provisions of 1990's American Disabilities Act (ADA). The law previously banned employment discrimination against the disabled for those companies with 25 or more employees. As of July 26, the law applies to companies with 15 or more employees.

The ADA makes it illegal to fire or refuse to hire simply because a person has a disability, unless it can be shown that the disability prevents the person from performing the basic functions of the job.

The law also mandates that employers make reasonable efforts to accommodate applicants or employees who must use a wheelchair or those that need special telephone equipment because of a hearing impairment. The key word here is reasonable. Recent court cases indicate that juries are using a "bottom-line" method to interpret this. In other words, if you are making a profit, you

should probably plan on making the accommodations. Along with the obvious disabilities mentioned and blindness, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and court decisions have included mental illness, obesity, and persons who have contracted AIDS.

On the brighter side, any accommodations must be requested. For example, let's say your business has some areas which are inaccessible to persons using wheelchairs. You get an applicant in a wheelchair qualified in every other way for a job, or a present employee is injured and confined to a wheelchair: if that person does not request that you accommodate his/her disability by installing wheelchair ramps, you do not have to do so. However, today's reality is that they are going to make the request, so you should be prepared to make the change or be sued.

Most commercial liability policies will not provide coverage if you were to be sued under the ADA. However, a slander or negligence count will usually

be included in the lawsuit so the insurance company will have to defend. But if a judgment is entered on any of the ADA counts, the insurance company denies coverage. Plainly, it is in your best interest to familiarize yourself with the law and do your utmost to comply.

Even those employers who have fewer than 15 employees are affected by the ADA. There are other provisions in the law that address topics such as disabled access to public facilities, i.e. handicap accessible restrooms, wheel chair ramps, etc. These provisions affect even the smallest businesses.

Hiring policies and detailed documentation of the basic functions of each and every job are the most efficient methods for an employer to protect against discrimination charges. Update your employee job descriptions and have them available when job applicants apply. If a handicapped individual does apply, review the description with them and if they do qualify you most likely will hire a very motivated and dedication employee for your farm.

Taking Care Of Business

by Mike McDermott, Grass Pad Warehouse, Olathe, Kansas

Compensating Laborers/Stackers

No one is more important to a sod operation than the laborer's and stackers who actually harvest the crop. An experienced crew can make average sod look exceptional and nurse marginal sod into tight rolls that might otherwise end up in many pieces. The one thing all sod operations have in common is the constant need for a good harvesting crew. The precise way in which production crews are compensated varies around the country and from farm to farm.

On some large Canadian farms a pure piecework system has evolved with some success. Harvesting crews arrive, do routine cutter maintenance and go to the field. The day's sod is harvested and equipment returned and cleaned. The crew receives no hourly wage but is paid solely based on sod cut that day. When things are running smoothly, the crews

do quite well. This operating system has been in place for over a decade and is well accepted by employer and employee.

In the United States a strong economy has brought good news and bad news. The good news is that lower interest rates and a recovering economy have sparked increased commercial and residential construction (see construction outlook on back page). The floods of 1994 are history. The bad news is that a stronger economy and low unemployment are creating labor shortages and putting increased pressure on wages and overall personnel benefit costs.

The U.S. unemployment rate is below 6%. In some areas it is even lower. In the Kansas City/Omaha area the rate is below 4%. At this point, entry level wages tend to rise as competition for scarce labor resources increases.

Compounding the problem is a continuing decline in the base population of young white males. The white male population (age 20-29) in the U.S. is expected to decline by more than 10% during the next 10 years.

Turfgrass sod farms in rural areas, where an agriculturally based labor force still exists, fare the best. Traditional agricultural employees familiar with farm work are accustomed to irregular hours, unpredictable weather and variable work schedules. When compared with other farm operations sod farms offer relatively high wages, regular work and a comparatively predictable work schedule. In this setting a straight hourly wage with or without overtime is common with a bonus paid at the end of the season.

Continued on back page.

Taking Care of Business continued.

In urban areas sod farms compete with factories and service sector jobs for scarce labor resources.

Like wise, sod has an "image" problem. Sod is perceived to be hard, dirty, labor intensive work. This is not only a hard sell with perspective employees, but also with employment agencies, vo-tech. counselors and student advisors. In this setting an hourly wage plus bonus is often paid based on production. Bonuses paid by the roll or by the pallet are common, often amounting to 20-50% of the base pay. Other benefits such as health insurance and paid vacation are more common.

Most producers prefer older more seasoned hands. While younger workers are often stronger, they are easily distracted. Most harvesting crews have repeated at their farms for more than one season. They are prized and appreciated by their employers and seem to enjoy the work. Most successful crews simply enjoy the day to day routine of working outdoors. They would go crazy working on a factory line or being indoors all day.

While sod growers generally bemoan the lack of work ethic on the part of some employees, most agree with Ron Nixon: "You get exactly what you demand and expect."

Setting the standard and insuring that those standards are met, is the employer's responsibility. There is more to that than any kind of compensation rewards or money.

TPI Action

CROP INSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION BEGINS: With the inclusion of turfgrass sod in the reformed federal crop insurance program TPI members should immediately initiate contact with their local U.S. Department of Agriculture office to obtain up-to-date information and complete all necessary forms. Because the processes are still being developed for this new federal program, members are encouraged to be persistent in their quest for application deadlines and all necessary documents.

Similar to the "Practical Guidance Memo" recently sent to all TPI members, the organization will continue to pursue this issue, making certain that the industry's needs and interests are fully represented and understood by the federal officials, and the members are aware of their options.

104th CONGRESS OFFERS PROMISE FOR INDUSTRY: With the seating of the Republican majorities in both Houses of Congress, issues being addressed by TPI may stand an improved chance of being positively advanced. Elected on a mandate of reducing government's intrusion in business and a demand for more effective use of all tax dollars, early indications are that the legislators will be more inclined to act on a variety of concerns.

Subjects that will continue to receive attention from TPI at the federal level will be:

1. Wetlands definitions;
2. 1995 Farm Bill;
3. Pesticide usage; and
4. Migrant farm worker issues.

TPI, through its Legal and Taxation Committee, professional staff and Washington, D.C. based law firm, will also endeavor to keep abreast of new issues that may arise as Congress takes up a variety of concerns that were not addressed by the last Congress or new issues that may spring-up during the next two years.

1995 Construction Outlook

Construction rates are expected to expand by 3% to \$294.1 billion at the start of 1995, lowering the rate of expansion from 7%, in 1994 & 1993 and from 9% in 1992.

Total U.S. single family housing starts are expected to decline by 2% , while the

total U.S. construction of income properties, manufacturing buildings, institutional buildings and public works are anticipated to climb by 2.3% .

For a detailed look at the 1995 construction outlook or for information for your area, call TPI at 800/405-TURF or fax 708/705-8347.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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