

CITY OF NEW YORK / PARKS & RECREATION

INNOVATIONS

AN OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT PLANNING NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 , December 1999

WHAT IS THE INNOVATIONS NEWSLETTER?

The Innovations Newsletter is a new forum for innovation created by Operations & Management Planning. Starting in December 1999, we will bring you new ideas and innovations that can be used to improve the maintenance and construction of all aspects of parks. If you have undertaken or been a part of an innovation, or if you have any ideas that you believe would make Parks a better or more efficient agency, please contact Geoff "Bass Clef" Hash at (212) 360-8289.

PARKS AND THE NATIONAL GUARD

This summer, Parks employees at the Greenbelt dealt with the problem of abandoned cars in parks in an extremely effective way: Parks staff in Staten Island called-in the National Guard. With access to a wide array of heavy equipment, as well as a great deal of manpower, the National Guard removed 31 cars and piles of automobile debris in one day. Seven cars were left in the vicinity of Deer Park due to the presence of a high-pressure gas line, but plans for a helicopter removal are currently underway.

These efforts are the result of a two-year-old initiative created by the National Guard known as GuardHelp. GuardHelp facilitates National Guard assistance to community groups and government organizations that do not have the personnel or equipment to handle situations of environmental or social concern.

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If a park or social organization in any borough is in need of certain resources to complete projects it would not be able to carry out otherwise, a letter outlining the project and requesting assistance should to be sent to:

Captain Linda Thornbird
Division of Military and Naval Affairs
330 Old Niskayuna Road
Latham, NY 12110.

Captain Thornbird can then direct the appropriate unit of the National Guard to assist with the project.

LANDSCAPE FABRIC

Capital Projects has issued new policies this past month for trees and planted areas. One such policy is that all woody-planting beds created as part of Capital Projects shall be provided with landscape fabric and shredded wood chip mulch to prevent weed growth. Landscape fabric is a polyester or polypropylene needle-punched plastic that lies on the ground below a layer of mulch. Desired plants grow between sections of plastic, while the majority of weeds are covered and, therefore, suppressed by it. Although some weeds may grow above the fabric in the mulch layer, they are very easily removed. Oxygen and water can pass through the tiny perforations, but seeds dispersed by animals and the wind are too large. An additional positive aspect of the plastic is that it insulates the ground, reducing temperature extremes in the soil.

The fabric is anchored to the ground by 6" aluminum staples. Individual boroughs keep extra staples, so if you see loose fabric at a Greenstreet, contact that borough's Greenstreet Manager. The managers are Tom Reidy in Brooklyn, Bill Calabrese in Queens, Ray Acosta in the Bronx, Shawn Spencer in Staten Island, and Eric Axelson in Manhattan.

For all other questions about landscape fabric, contact Jesse Kiendl at (718) 760-6803.

NEW R&D TEAM

Operations and Management Planning has a new Research & Development Team. This team works on finding new products, practices, and technologies for use in New York City's parks and recreational facilities. Some of their current projects include:

- Identifying more effective graffiti removal techniques
- Standardizing paint colors for Parks' facilities
- Identifying sealant for handball court expansion joints
- Finding effective ways to repair cracks in concrete and asphalt
- Improving handicapped-accessible drinking fountains to make them more durable and maintenance friendly
- Improving quality and longevity of safety surface
- Installing rubber animal art in tot lots

R&D is also working to make comfort stations more customer friendly for the public and easier to clean and maintain by M&O. Already they have installed soap and paper towel dispensers at several sites in the city which have received a positive response from the public.

This division within OMP is available to research products and innovations for parks citywide. R&D staff are happy to make site visits to discuss ideas or problems.

If you have any questions, ideas, or innovations for R&D, call Emily Willits at (212) 360-8298 or Marc Dember at (212) 360-8278. They are eager to help.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL PRODUCTS FOR PLAY EQUIPMENT

Capital Projects Division of Specifications and Estimating has worked with play equipment manufacturers to develop graffiti removers that remove graffiti from powder-coated play equipment while leaving the powder-coated paint relatively untouched. They determined that the following three graffiti removal products listed should be used to remove graffiti from powder-coated play equipment.

1. Go-Away, manufactured by NEXGEN, North Hollywood, CA, (800) 263-9436: \$254.64/case of 12 one-pint containers

2. Hilti So Safe, manufactured by Hilti, Long Island City, NY (800) 879-8000: \$143.70/case of 12 one-quart containers

3. Gametime Graffiti Remover, manufactured by Gametime, Fort Payne, AL (800) 235-2440: \$480.00/case of 24 sixteen-ounce containers

These products are interchangeable: any of them can be used regardless of the play equipment manufacturer. It is important to note that these and only these products should be used to remove graffiti from powder-coated play equipment. Use of any other products will damage the powder-coat finish.

These three products do not require water, although it is best to use a spray bottle and rag to clean away residue after the graffiti remover has been applied. As long as the play equipment finish is still in good condition, the graffiti wipes right off, making removing graffiti easier than painting over it. Even with these specially-designed products, some powder-coat might come off, so it is best to use as little of the remover as possible.

These products also remove graffiti from vinyl-coated surfaces and plastic play elements, although not as effectively as from the powder-coated surfaces. Graffiti removal products are specified as extra materials in all capital playground reconstructions. For each new playground, a total of 192 oz. of graffiti remover is provided by the contractor, either as: 1) six 32-oz. bottles, or 2) twelve 16-oz. bottles. The bottles are labeled "For Play Equipment." Contractors are also required to furnish 90 oz. of touchup paint for play equipment. All districts should have at least some of these products on hand for ongoing graffiti removal from play equipment.

For more information about graffiti removers, contact Marc Dember of OMP at (212) 360-8278.

NEW DESIGN ISSUES MEETING

This fall the Capital Projects Design Division instituted a biweekly Design Issues Meeting to address issues involving the design and construction of parks and recreational facilities. Already, the meeting has been particularly productive for addressing concerns recently raised by M&O personnel.

If you would like to know more about the Design Issues Meeting, or submit something for the agenda, call Nicole Clare at (718) 760-6942.

- Prepared by Geoffrey "Bass Clef" Hash -

FIELDTURF

Parks is exploring a new kind of artificial turf for use in the construction of high-use athletic fields that has the look and feel of real grass. This product, called FieldTurf, is a polyethylene/polypropylene "grass" on a rubber, sand, and ground-up-sneaker infill. At an estimated price of \$7.75 per square foot, it is cheaper than AstroTurf. Furthermore,

athletes tend to prefer FieldTurf, or similar products, over conventional AstroTurf for a variety of reasons. Unlike AstroTurf, this new product has proven to be more attractive, more lifelike, and safer than its alternatives. FieldTurf has the feel and look of grass. When people slide in it, they do not get burns as they so often do in AstroTurf. A soccer ball passing through it reacts as if it is passing through real grass, not skimming on top of an artificial substance. Additionally, a rubber and sand substrate is incorporated into the base of the FieldTurf, so play occurs on soil-like conditions, not a concrete floor. This reduces the number of knee and ankle injuries. Parks will use FieldTurf at Mulally Park in the Bronx, Ft. Hamilton Athletic Fields in Brooklyn, and James J. Walker Park in Manhattan. Construction at Ft. Hamilton, the largest of the three installations, is scheduled to be completed by September 2000.

For more information on FieldTurf and similar products, contact Adam Freed at (212) 360-1308.

IRRIGATION POLICY

Following OMP's Fall 1998 lawns study, First Deputy Commissioner Alan Moss established the policy that no new lawn or planted area come out of Capital without provisions for irrigation. Furthermore, every distinct area within a lawn must have its own water source, whether it be in the form of coupler links, a Kifco water reel, or an in-ground sprinkler system. In light of this policy, you should make sure that your parks are irrigated if they are coming out of Capital.

One of the biggest challenges for designers is that each site is unique, with different soil conditions, sediment structures, and M&O crews, and therefore calls for a unique irrigation system. For this reason, Operations will continue to assess which products work best in the different environments. In-ground irrigation systems have already been installed in Brooklyn's Fulton Park, Wingate Running Track, PS 59, Cobble Hill Park, and Holocaust Park, as well as Central Park's Great Lawn in Manhattan. Before-and-after photographs reveal striking differences in the appearance of irrigated and unirrigated lawns. The first fully-automated irrigation system at Parks is currently in design and will be completed in the coming spring.

For more information on irrigation policy, contact Adam Freed at (212) 360-1308.

City of New York Parks & Recreation

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Henry J. Stern, Commissioner

Alan M. Moss, First Deputy Commissioner
Robert L. Garafola, Deputy Commissioner
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