

Technology

Weathering Storms with the Latest Technology

By Lisa Plummer



For many clubs, weather is not only a constant consideration, but also a dominating force that can profoundly impact daily operations, activities and events. Although keeping tabs on the weather is important, what busy manager has the time to keep checking local weather reports, which may not always be that accurate? Enter WeatherBug Club Safety, a real-time, state-of-the-art weather tracking and lightning detection system featuring live weather data and severe weather alerts. For a growing number of clubs across the country, using this system has been key in helping managers improve club safety, member services and experience.

"WeatherBug weather stations and lightning detection systems are the new standard and are constantly on guard," said Frank McCathran, director of WeatherBug education, media and club safety. "Once the equipment detects some sort of severe weather within range of the club, WeatherBug will notify club management through a variety of methods... disseminating weather information in a meaningful way, directly to users via Web-based, mobile and other alerting devices in real time."

Once the hardware is installed, the club becomes part of the company's 8,000-plus network that measures, monitors and collects weather data. By being able to monitor both local and regional weather conditions, clubs have the added advantage of more advanced lightning and severe weather warnings, giving them extra time to make important operating decisions.

WeatherBug's Total Lightning detection and notification system can be a real lifesaver. As the most advanced lightning detection technology available today, it not only monitors cloud-to-ground lightning strikes, but also cloud-to-cloud activity.

This component has been key for the Hamilton Harbor Yacht Club in Naples, Florida, where weather conditions can change on a dime. Having accurate, up-to-the-minute weather information is critical for keeping staff and members safe, said Jack Sullivan, CCM, HHYC general manager and vice president.

"We're in the lightning capital of the world, so (with the WeatherBug system) we can see what's happening and then communicate with staff," Sullivan said. "We have dry storage and use a forklift, so that's like riding on a lightning rod. The last thing I want to have happen is a staff member putting a boat in during a time when lightning can strike."

The WeatherBug system also has been a wonderful amenity for HHYC's members, who enjoy the added convenience of checking dockside weather status from HHYC's Online Weather Center both on-site and remotely from the club's Web site, Sullivan said.

"If the weather is very bad, it saves someone from coming to the club and having to turn around and go home," Sullivan said, "or in reverse, if the weather's bad at their home, it might be good at the club. They can go on their computer, log in, and see a live camera of the club, marina, waters and the live weather conditions. That's certainly a benefit."

The system is also a great marketing and promotional tool, Sullivan said. By choosing WeatherBug's optional feature of partnering clubs with local TV stations, live images from the HHYC's Webcam and data from its weather station are now regularly broadcast on local weather reports.

WeatherBug Club Safety also has been instrumental for the Beach Point Club in Mamaroneck, New York, which had similar reasons for acquiring the system, including improving club safety, member services and community awareness.

"As a functioning yacht club, we find extreme value in the local weather conditions, especially the wind data of direction and speed," said General Manager Randy Ruder, CCM, CCE. "This resource becomes extremely valuable during storms, as it enables staff and members to make educated decisions on what steps need to occur in order to protect our marina and the members' boats."

Like the HHYC, BPC not only wanted their WeatherBug system to drive Web site traffic and engage members, but also to promote itself and benefit the local public by making its weather information available via the Internet and mobile devices. In addition, the system has helped the club make the most appropriate decisions when it comes to event management.

"Our local weather station has become an invaluable management tool for deciding whether dining functions should be indoors or outdoors," Ruder said. "We frequently need to make last-minute decisions, so the local data has proven extremely beneficial." ■