

Signature Golf Information Centre

Golf can be a Dangerous Sport...

Golf can be a dangerous sport and the potential for danger from negligent design and maintenance exists on many courses

Golf car mishaps, environmental concerns, slips and falls, maintenance equipment accidents and exposure to weather can all result in serious injury to golfers, guests and employees.

In today's growing litigious environment it has become even more important to implement a sound risk management program to help prevent injuries and property damage, as well as to protect against liability.

The process should begin with a complete inventory of all areas of potential liability. These include, but are not limited to, the physical grounds, operations, vehicles and natural causes.

The following list is not meant to be all-encompassing but merely a starting point for you to reference as you inventory your facility. Once you have thoroughly examined your own operations and listed every possibility for exposure to accident or injury you must then commit to reviewing your checklist on at least a quarterly basis.

Here are some things to think about as you walk your golf course grounds;

The Physical Grounds

Risks are abundant throughout a golf course property both on and off the course.

- Examine course design for defects. Are golf balls entering private properties, roads or adjacent holes? Are there blind tee shots, dangerous doglegs or other places of concern? Are the waiting areas adjacent to tees safe? Remember that the majority of golf shots are off line and that the improvements in golf equipment has resulted in even longer distances today.
- Ventilation systems in golf car storage buildings, acid storage, battery disposal, energy management and equipment wash facilities are all areas for potential accidents.
- Are golf car paths appropriately located, designed, engineered, constructed and maintained? Is speed controlled and are warning signs posted at hills?
- Pedestrian paths, steps and bridges need to be free from trip and slip hazards.
- Trees are a source of numerous accidents on courses. Inspections should monitor the potential for eye injury from low-hanging branches as well as injury from falling branches.

- Practice range accidents can occur if the range is improperly designed, maintained and operated. Are tee stations adequately separated, are protective barriers in place, and are participants properly controlled?

Operations

Proper maintenance procedures are required to present the golf course for play, but risk management and safety should be of equal importance.

- Environmental concerns relative to pesticides, fertilizers, water quality and quantity and energy need to be addressed. Misuse or abuse of these materials can lead to serious damage and significant exposure to liability.
- Golf course construction projects may be a source of accidents. Are open trenches properly marked? Is every care taken when digging around utilities? Are trenches protected against cave-in? Is your golf course's equipment adequate for the task?
- Is the fire suppression system in the kitchen current and meets ULC 1254.6 requirements?
- Proper waste management and recycling can prevent environmental contamination.
- Safety training for general maintenance operations such as mowing, fertilization, irrigation, aerification and topdressing is important for accident prevention.
- Personal protective equipment must be provided, fitted and used when required.
- Repetitive-motion problems are common in golf course maintenance operations. Precautions to avoid injury to employees who hold their wrists, arms or shoulders in odd positions or who frequently perform the same tasks continuously for long periods need to be in place.

Automobiles, Golf Cars and Utility Vehicles

Drivers and passengers of utility vehicles and golf cars need to follow the same precautions as one would in their own motor vehicles.

- Are valid driver's licenses required before an employee is permitted to drive company vehicles on public roads?
- Is a valid driver's license required in order to rent a golf car?
- Golf cars carry enormous liability. Be sure that there is a program in place to review and service vehicles prior to each use. Problem vehicles should be kept out-of-service until repaired.
- All employees must be carefully trained before using utility vehicles.

Emergencies, Natural Disasters and Weather

Preparing to manage unforeseen emergencies is the first and most important step to recovery, should a disaster strike.

- Having written emergency response guidelines ensures that employees understand their duties and responsibilities and may significantly reduce liability in the event of a natural disaster.
- Does the course have a lightening detection and early warning device?
- Defibrillators belong on golf courses where cardiac arrests occur.
- Employees should be adequately trained in fire safety and prevention programs.
- Employees and golfers need to be educated about the risk of heat stroke, sunburn and skin cancer.

Effective safety training and risk management programs are not developed overnight which is why golf course managers and superintendents must continually work with their staff to identify and correct problem areas. The goal of zero accidents for employees, guests and the entire golf course staff is achievable with the right commitment and careful planning.

Find a related article at:

<http://turf.lib.msu.edu/1990s/1998/980906.pdf>

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MANAGE YOUR INSURANCE NEEDS.**

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