



Safety Bulletin: Golf Cart Safety Issues

October 2015

Golf carts being operated by customers who drive recklessly can lead to serious and in some cases fatal injuries. Here are some comments from one of the leaders in the golf insurance industry.

"We have heard of 4 extremely serious cart roll overs this season alone and in every case it was due to a golfer driving too quickly and ejecting themselves and/or the passenger. The injuries can be as severe as permanent brain damage including paralysis.

Golf Carts are too fast and are driven by golfers who may have never driven a cart before and may not know the golf course grounds. Pathways need to have speed bumps and signage at hills and before tight corners to alert drivers to the risks.

We recommend that you manage your "traffic flow", this includes the regulars/members, staff and most importantly, first timers. Look at the golf course from the eyes of a first time guest.

Golf Carts are incredibly dangerous. They have become faster and are silent. You don't hear them coming and they can be very difficult to stop (particularly on wet grass). Golf Course owners and operators need to review their rental policies particularly at public courses where the golfers do not know the course and can be caught off guard by steep hills and tight corners.

It also goes without saying that Golf Courses must demand to see a current driver's license at the time of rental and require a through Waiver Release before they allow anyone to drive a cart.

The golf community needs a reminder that one bad accident will put them out of business."

James Grant, President & CEO

Signature Risk Partners Inc.

Earlier this year, there was a fatality when a golfer lost control of their golf cart resulting in their death. When there is a critical or a fatal injury on the premises of a workplace in Ontario, such as a Golf Course, the Golf Course is required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act to immediately contact the Ministry of Labour so they can send an Inspector to perform an investigation. The end result may not be charges laid against the Golf Course as a result of the unfortunate incident, but that Golf Course will then be on the Ministry of Labour's radar and will most likely have the MOL review their health and safety program in its entirety to ensure it meets current regulations.

The Golf Course can also expect to see an Inspector on a regular basis if the initial inspection by the MOL does not go well. Orders and fines unrelated to the initial incident can also be levied if the golf course is deemed to be not in compliance. Taking the simple precautions described by James Grant could help prevent serious issues and consequences from arising.

Jim also reported that there have been some serious fire incidents related to the improper storage and recharging of golf carts and their batteries. Grant continues,

“As a result of the Cart Barn fires and Rollovers insurers have already put upward pressure on insurance premiums for Golf Courses. This has had an immediate impact on EVERY Golf Course in Canada and rates will continue to rise if the accidents keep happening. As you know once rates go up it takes a decade before they come back down again so Golf Course operators need to protect themselves and improve their risk management practices now.”

When a battery is being recharged, it emits hydrogen gas that is extremely flammable and very dangerous! Any area where batteries are being recharged must have a means of exhausting the fumes.

Warning signs should be posted advising those nearby not to allow sources of ignition in that area. Some obvious examples are smoking and using a hand torch but the not so obvious examples can include the use of cell phones or tools that are not spark proof. If your workers are refilling batteries with acid and/or distilled water, then they must be wearing splash proof goggles, a face shield, long sleeve neoprene gloves and an acid resistant apron. There should be a spill kit nearby to deal with any spills and baking soda to sprinkle on any acid to neutralize it. There should also be an eyewash station available within ten seconds of unencumbered access of this area as is required by regulations.

By taking some reasonable precautions, those of us in the golf industry can ensure that players can safely enjoy the game we love and our workers can do their jobs without suffering an injury. Please contact Bill Godkin at CE Safety to schedule a Safety Review or for more information.

Bill Godkin

CEsafety.com

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