

Top tips for safe golf cart operations

Golf carts are essential in golf course operations and large recreational property management. While they provide great convenience, the operation, storage, and ownership of a golf cart fleet has significant hazards that should be managed to keep riders safe. Many serious injuries have resulted from the improper operation of carts on steep terrain, roadway crossings, and horseplay. Public intoxication, improper cart maintenance, and storage practices also have contributed to injuries, losses, and lawsuits.

Implementing the following strategies can lower the potential risk to your business and improve the safety of your customers.

General strategies

Before releasing a cart to a customer, have them show a valid driver's license and credit card. A driver's license provides proof that the operator is of legal driving age, and provides a name to hold accountable for an at-fault accident. A credit card can be a source of recovery for cart damage and may make an operator more careful if they know they are going to be charged for damages caused by careless operation.

Post warnings in the pro shop and on the carts indicating safe operating procedures for the cart. Or print the safe operating procedures on the scorecard if it's a golf course. It should be made clear that public intoxication is not tolerated and other warnings should include speeding and horseplay.

Maintain carts to manufacturer specifications and keep them fully charged or fueled before letting anyone take them out.

Cart paths should be paved when possible and wide enough for two lanes in high-traffic areas. Post signs warning of the paving ends or if it is a high-traffic path.

Trim low-hanging limbs and overgrown shrubs back from the cart pathway. Dying or dead trees that have the potential to fall across cart paths should be removed and cut down.

Road crossings, steep grades, lower speed areas, and sharp turns should be marked with warning signs. Install barriers where the danger is severe. Instruct drivers to go up or down slopes rather than sideways, which could result in a rollover. All bridges should have bumpers that prevent the cart from going over the bridge edges.

Restrict use in rain or heavy frost when the carts are likely to slip or slide on ground surfaces.

Safely store your fleet

When operating your fleet of carts, one thing that shouldn't be overlooked is the safe storage at the end of the day. As you store your fleet, keep these things in mind to make sure the carts stay in good working condition:

- Store carts indoors after hours whenever possible to prevent theft and tampering. If you don't have an indoor location, store them in a fenced, enclosed area, or chain them together with a fortified lock and chain. In any circumstance, surveillance cameras are a plus.
- If you're fortunate enough to have more than one storage garage on your site, consider dividing your cart fleet into separate buildings to spread the risk so a single disaster like a fire or tornado will not take out all your equipment at the same time.
- Make sure the building is ventilated to allow for the escape of any fuel vapors that might come from a leaking cart or the buildup of hydrogen gas from battery chargers.
- Provide an eyewash station, face shields, rubber aprons, and gloves required by OSHA to your employees responsible for charging operations.
- Provide fire extinguishers for every 50-feet of the building. Secure them to the proper hangers on the wall and post signage above them.
- Electrical within the building should be in excellent condition and adequate for the charging load if carts are electric. There should be no permanent use of electrical extension cords within the building.

Learn more at secura.net/safety-resources

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- Wood burners should be discouraged in any service building and are prohibited by code in most areas where there is any presence of flammable liquids or fuel operated equipment.
- Spray painting operations also should be discouraged because of the potential for ignition of flammable/explosive vapors.

Preventative maintenance

It's crucial to keep a checklist for cart inspection on all carts. Any problems to carts should be corrected before releasing them to the user. Service should meet or exceed the manufacturer recommended standards. When it comes to personal injury involving a cart, Proof of Maintenance could be highly important, so retain your service records.

If carts are leased or you elect to use a service company, make sure you obtain and keep their certificates of insurance, have your company named as an additional insured, and update them upon expiration. The responsiveness of the service company is critical to your success. Some companies make weekly visits, and others are only available by calling.

Golf carts have become essential for most golf courses and recreational properties. Setting some rules, warnings, and procedures can help you lower the risk, and provide your patrons with greater safety and your company greater peace of mind.