



## What to Do About Soil Heaving

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**W**e have a problem with heaving soils on our golf course. In late winter the surfaces of fairways and greens are severely heaved. The surfaces eventually settle as the frost leaves the ground and we roll the surfaces. Unfortunately, we lose a significant number of sprinkler heads during the process. Is there anything that can be done to reduce damage?

Soil heaving is a phenomenon at many northern golf courses where surface soils freeze for long periods during the winter months. The heaving occurs as water from the unfrozen soils below is drawn toward the frozen soil layer above. The water freezes, creating a lens that forces the surface soils to heave. The result is not for the faint of heart. Fortunately, the surfaces usually settle out quite nicely as the frost leaves the ground and the ice melts. Superintendents in northern New England insulate vulnerable sprinkler heads with a partial bale of straw or with a piece of foam insulation board, and try not to panic when they see the moonscape that awaits them in spring.