



Why Are Carts Occasionally Restricted To Cart Paths?



Ruts created by golf cart tires during wet conditions are unsightly and the damage can often take weeks to fully recover.

Golf carts have become an integral part of the game; they increase the accessibility of golf courses and provide an additional revenue source for facilities. Given the popularity of golf carts, facilities use a combination of signs, stakes and ropes to control traffic and mitigate any damage. In high-traffic areas, or during periods of extreme moisture, heat or drought, it may also be necessary to restrict carts to paths to avoid widespread turf injury.

With all the open space on a golf course, it can be amazing to see how often golfers drive their carts in exactly the same locations. These consistent traffic patterns can cause serious turf issues. Almost all golf courses have a few spots that experience turf thinning because virtually all cart traffic runs across the same area. Temporary cart restrictions are often needed in these areas simply to give turf a break from excessive golf cart traffic.

Saturated conditions and cart traffic do not go well together. Carts can slide and skid when conditions are wet, causing significant turf damage. Soil compaction is a concern anytime vehicles are driven on turf, but the effects of vehicle traffic are compounded when the ground is saturated. Soft conditions combined with narrow golf cart tires raises an additional concern of tire rutting. Not only does rutting affect the appearance and playability of a golf course, the repair process consumes valuable time and labor that could be devoted to other areas of the golf course.



The need for cart restrictions during extreme heat and drought may not be as well understood by golfers; however, the damage caused by cart traffic during these conditions can be just as devastating as during overly wet conditions. Repairing cart damage incurred during extremely hot or dry conditions can be a slow process and may require seeding or sodding to bring about a full recovery. Once again, this labor could be focused on maintaining other areas of the golf course.

Adding drainage to wet areas or removing trees to increase sunlight and air movement may help get carts back on the course sooner after a rain event, but ultimately the duration of cart restrictions is in the hands of Mother Nature. Cloud cover and high humidity will prolong wet conditions while full sun, ample wind and low humidity will help lift cart restrictions sooner. When carts are restricted due to drought and excessive heat, relief in the form of rain and lower temperatures is necessary before cart restrictions are lifted.

Any type of traffic, whether it is from golf carts or maintenance equipment, causes turf stress when it is concentrated. Golfers can help reduce damage from cart traffic by following signage, avoiding stressed areas and taking unique routes when carts are permitted to leave paths. Driving where the grass is greener may seem counterintuitive, but dispersing traffic over a large area will help maintain healthy turf.