



Golf Outings: Maintenance Needs Their Piece Of The Pie Too



Golf outings are a great source of revenue, but hosting too many can take a toll on course conditioning.

During the past decade, golf outings have evolved from sources of supplemental revenue to crucial revenue generators that are vital to the survival of many golf facilities. At first glance, golf outings are a commonsense hole-in-one for both the host facility and the participants – the host facility gains extra revenue, and possibly a few new golfers, and the participants have a fun day of golf. The benefits provided by golf outings can be significant, but golf outings also have their costs.

One of the major costs associated with golf outings is their impact on maintenance scheduling. To avoid interrupting normal play, courses often schedule outings on days that traditionally have a low play volume. Unfortunately, golf course superintendents often perform important maintenance tasks on days with low play because their staff can work more efficiently. When a golf facility books one or more golf outings per week it can be very difficult for the maintenance staff to perform critical maintenance tasks. Golf outing and course maintenance scheduling issues can be particularly challenging for facilities that are already challenged with rising maintenance costs and a tough labor market. Ultimately, if critical course maintenance tasks cannot be performed due to a steady stream of outings, turfgrass problems and poor playing conditions will develop.

There are indirect costs associated with hosting golf outings that are absorbed by the maintenance department. Problems associated with outings – e.g., soil compaction, traffic stress and decreased maintenance productivity – may not be immediately obvious but will eventually require extra resources to remedy. Additionally, these problems can become



worse as more outings are booked; requiring even more resources to accommodate the increased rounds and reduced time for maintenance.

So, what can your golf facility do to prevent turfgrass problems associated with golf outings? The simple answer is to provide the maintenance department with additional resources to counteract the impacts associated with hosting golf outings. Remember to account for any regular maintenance that was skipped because of an outing. Other considerations include:

- The general manager, superintendent, golf professional and other key decision-makers should collectively determine the appropriate number of golf outings that can be hosted annually and start times that make it possible to complete necessary maintenance. There also needs to be a plan for allocating supplemental resources to help manage any maintenance issues caused by outings.
- Understanding how resources are allocated throughout the golf course is essential to managing the impact of golf outings. There are numerous software programs that help superintendents determine how much is spent on specific tasks and areas of the property so that informed management decisions can be made.
- Create regular maintenance gaps that allow the maintenance department to efficiently perform critical maintenance tasks with minimal interruption from golfers. This can offset some of the scheduling impacts of golf outings.
- Consult your local USGA Agronomist to help identify and implement innovative resource-allocation strategies.

Golf outings are very important to golf facilities and a fun way to bring new players to your facility. However, it is essential to plan for the challenges that are associated with hosting golf outings – i.e., maintenance scheduling issues and turfgrass injury. Be proactive and allocate the appropriate resources so course conditions can exceed expectations during golf outings and regular play.