



Winter Drainage Insurance

By Zach Nicoludis, agronomist, Central Region | December 1, 2017



A piece of black drainage pipe mounted to a U-post and placed adjacent to a surface drain can help keep drainage basins free from snow during late winter.

Ice on a golf course keeps superintendents up at night worrying about turf health. Long periods of ice cover can slowly suffocate dormant turf that still requires oxygen for respiration throughout the winter months. Unfortunately, surface drains connected to subsurface drain tile cannot function effectively when there is snow cover and frost in the soil.

A unique way to enhance winter drainage was observed during a recent Course Consulting Service visit to Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minnesota. The staff placed black drainage pipe attached to U-posts over each drainage basin in areas where water is likely to collect during a thaw. On sunny days, the dark pipe radiates heat which melts any snow over and around the surface drains. Obviously, the pipe won't keep drains open all winter, but moving excess water off turf as winter transitions to spring is well worth the effort. After all, cool-season grasses have far less tolerance to winter stress during spring than late fall.

Don't discard short pieces of black pipe left over from drainage projects. They may provide valuable insurance from winter stress. You may even sleep a little more soundly this winter.

Central Region Agronomists:

Bob Vavrek, regional director – bvavrek@usga.org

John Daniels, agronomist – jdaniels@usga.org

Zach Nicoludis, agronomist – znicoludis@usga.org

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)