



Removing ice from putting greens in early winter can increase the risk of turf injury from low temperatures and desiccation.

THINK TWICE BEFORE REMOVING ICE

BY BOB VAVREK | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, CENTRAL REGION

Ice on putting greens causes a lot of sleepless nights for golf course superintendents. The problem is in your face. You can see it, touch it, walk on it and hit it with a hammer if you like. It's a time bomb ticking each day it remains, so turf managers have devised a range of simple to elaborate strategies to remove ice before it suffocates turf.

However, researchers don't agree about when the ice bomb explodes. We do know that creeping bentgrass survives longer under ice than *Poa annua*, but we don't have an absolute number regarding the number of days turf can survive ice encasement. We believe the chances of *Poa annua* surviving more than 75 days under ice are low, but some studies show it dying earlier or later depending upon a myriad of factors, such as snow cover above the ice and turf health prior to ice formation. There are many, many moving parts to consider when trying to decipher the causes of winterkill. Some recent research about ice cover is discussed in the USGA article, "Winterkill – Causes and Prevention."

Recent heavy rains followed by a frigid blast of subzero weather affected many courses across the northern part of the Central Region. Superintendents are reporting partial to complete ice cover on putting greens and some are already making plans for ice removal.

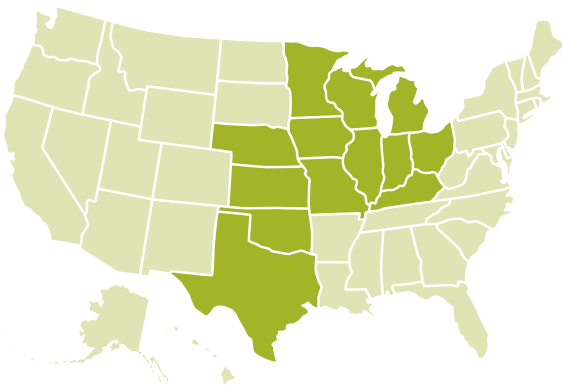
Ice removal is not the best course of action right now. There is always a risk of causing physical injury to the putting greens when removing ice and snow. The risk of winter injury also increases exponentially if you succeed in removing ice and then expose turf to wind and frigid temperatures. Instead, count your blessings that there is ice and snow covering putting greens considering the prediction for record low temperatures across the upper Midwest.

Keep in mind, turf injury may have already occurred when the ice formed. Removing ice now, after the fact, will likely cause far more harm than good. Let's revisit the topic of ice removal come March, but for now, sit tight and try to stay warm.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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