

Hazard Trees on the Golf Course

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Trees are as important to a golf course as are the players. Recognizing tree hazards on the golf course and performing remediation or removal is essential to remove the risks involved with their presence. Trees may be dangerous. In this litigative society, this is where an ounce of prevention is worth ten pounds of cure. There are many common defects associated with tree hazards and the ability to evaluate these defects should be left in the hands of an experienced Consulting Arborist. Golf course superintendents are experts with turf by virtue of education, continuing education and experience. Many are quite knowledgeable on trees, and tree health, yet this is not their prime area of expertise and rightly so. There is only so much time in one life.

The liabilities involved with "Hazard Trees" is tremendous. The bottom line responsibilities of serious injury from tree related incidents lies with the owner. Our courts are getting more and more cases involving tree related accidents.

Most of our golf courses still have old willow trees, poplar trees and cottonwoods that have passed maturity years ago. Many of the courses I have played on have older trees with large dead branches, big cavities, construction damage, reduced soil level or increased soil level on the roots or around the trunk, dead branches hanging, and many more indicators of actual hazards.

In order for a tree to become a "Hazard Tree" it must have a target. Unfortunately, like myself, not all golfers stay in the fairway. By virtue of the game, this makes most of the golf course accessible and susceptible. To protect your crews, players,

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and owners may I suggest having a "HAZARD TREE INVENTORY" completed during your off months (Jan., Feb., March, April). Most golf courses have tree pruning crews do their work in the winter, and armed with your "Hazard Tree Inventory" you derive multiple benefits from your tree care dollars. You may have only one hazard tree on your course or you may have many. Hazard trees are dangerous. Have them identified, and remediated.

An inventory of trees is advisable. It should contain enough information, ie: size, species, location, condition, and dollar value to be of any real use to your organization. Ideally an

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inventory not only includes the above but it also should be done as to be acceptable on your computer. With the above information on disc the superintendent is well armed with the necessary data to make timely, money saving and wise decisions regarding the trees on his course and the safety of all that play on it.

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