

Green Section Record

REGIONAL UPDATE

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Stakes and ropes are used to direct golfers to enter and exit cart paths through the gates. Once golfers learn the system, only the gates are used.

TRAFFIC SCHOOL

BY BRIAN WHITLARK | AGRONOMIST, WEST REGION

Starting in October and November every year, golfers flock to the desert southwest to escape the cold and enter a sun-splashed golfing wonderland. This is the prime golf season for desert courses, and it will continue through April or May of the following year. This is the season where golf courses make the majority of their revenue and golfer expectations for great conditions are at their peak. With the increase in rounds, golf cart traffic is also at its peak for the year and managing traffic to minimize turf damage is a real challenge. Employing a version of traffic school is one way many courses in the Coachella Valley have successfully taught golfers where to exit and reenter cart paths.

Courses have found success using the “gate system,” where two poles are used to direct golfers where to exit cart paths after teeing off and where to reenter the path near the green. However, early in the prime golf season, golfers may



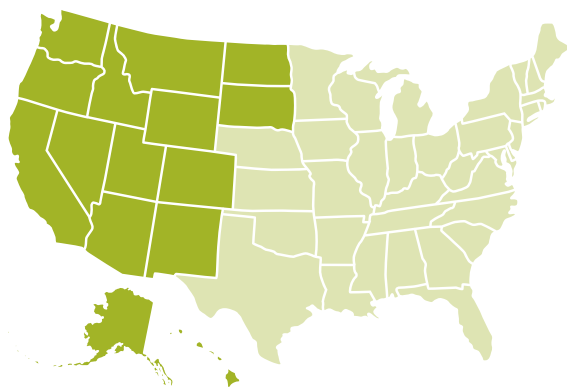
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not be familiar with the proper etiquette for driving carts through the gates. A subtle form of education shows golfers how to use the gates, which ultimately helps to protect the turf health and aesthetics of their golf course. Courses use stakes and ropes to direct golf carts through the gates for the first few months of the prime golf season. Once the golfers are used to the system, courses often remove the stakes and ropes and leave only the gates to control traffic.

In the winter, with minimal turf growth and potentially more than 100 carts per day navigating the course, it is necessary to move the gates, stakes and ropes as often as daily. While this is a labor-intensive process, it has proven to be an effective method to minimize turf damage. The process also becomes less time-consuming once golfers have learned to use only the gates.

While traffic school is never fun, it has been a proven strategy to educate golfers on the best way to navigate carts to and from cart paths while minimizing turf damage. Best wishes during the winter season and please do not hesitate to contact the [USGA Green Section West Office](#) for more information on these strategies or any other agronomic practices.



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