

Golf cart Safety 1st suggestions

According to an article in the July 2008 issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, from 1990 until 2006, the golf cart-related injury rate rose more than 130 percent. During this period, nearly 150,000 injuries were recorded in people as young as 2 months and as old as 96 years.¹

The following are suggestions developed to help facilitate the responsible use of golf carts. Golf cart use recommendations can be impacted by various factors, including local conditions, federal, state, and local law, regulations, and policy. These suggestions address three areas that can support your risk management efforts to achieve safe cart operation.

1. Administrative loss control tips – information for owners of carts or if you are leasing carts for a specific event.
2. Tips for safe operation – use these points to help enforce responsible operation of a golf cart. This section is designed to serve as a handout you can provide users as part of any event. This page can be copied and posted in the golf cart windshield and/or provided each user group at the time they use the cart.
3. Cart pre- and post-operations loss control sample checklist. This section can be used as a pre- and post-risk management tool to ensure the cart is maintained in a safe condition.

Organizations should provide golf cart users with a copy of safe operating guidelines and take steps to communicate these guidelines with all potential users before they are allowed to drive a cart (whether leased or owned). Reinforce the guidelines for safe cart use as part of your event communications.

Manufacturers' operator manuals are excellent resources for creating guidelines for golf cart users. Organizations should make drivers aware of hazards that might exist with cart operations based on the event. This message can be impacted by various factors, such as, event attendance and dynamics, weather conditions, cart design, driver age, etc. Operating guidelines must outline where the cart can and cannot go.

Drivers need to maintain caution when following other carts, and should be prepared to stop quickly, and establish safe distances between carts when following other carts. Safe distances of separation need to include stopping distance. Drivers should never speed to a stop behind another cart.

Administrative loss control tips

- Enforcement of operator guidelines is the best risk management practice and helps establish use expectations.
- Visibly post all golf cart safety guidelines. Wording font should allow for easy readability of all guidelines. (It may be beneficial to have a bilingual version, depending on the demographics of your user group.)
- Carts provided by a third-party may not meet guidelines that need to be implemented as part of an accident prevention loss control strategy. Part of your pre-use inspection process needs to include an assessment of how visible the operator guidelines are to drivers. If cart stickers designed to communicate guidelines are worn, difficult to read or hard to see, take steps to provide a new sticker or take the cart out of service until you can correct this matter.
- Drivers should be 18 years of age and hold a valid driver's license.
- Authorize specific members of your organization as "permissible drivers" and limit all driving just to those people.
- Prohibit racing and operating carts under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Observe the passenger limit (only 2 people allowed in a 2-person carts/or 4 people allowed in a 4-person cart).

- All golf carts should have seat belts for the operator and each passenger (this is particularly important for any child passenger), which should be used at all times to reduce the possibility of ejection. Consult the manufacturer's guidelines regarding proper use of seatbelts. If a cart is not equipped with seatbelts, additional expectations should be communicated to all operators to reinforce safe operation.
- Occupants should remain seated and keep hands, arms, feet, and legs inside the cart. Instruct passengers to hold on tight at all times.
- To reduce the probability of an accident, avoid creating a situation where the golf cart must be put in reverse.
- When the golf cart is not in use, secure it with a cable and lock or other secure locking mechanism
- Remind drivers to be aware of pedestrian traffic where pedestrians have the right-of-way.
- If you are a youth-serving organization, require your program staff to get approval from a designated director of your management team to utilize a golf cart. A list of approved drivers should be posted at all times. Have program staff read the operator's manual and sign and date completion of this task.
- Require staff to take a test drive, without passengers, to familiarize themselves with the vehicle and its operation.
- All cart operational guidelines and maintenance records should be maintained for the duration of the carts functionality. Include a review of this material as part of your audit process.
- Only golf carts with headlights, tail lights, turn signals, and windshields should be used after dark.

Sample Cart pre- and post-loss control checklist

Pre-operation check list:

- A complete overview of all carts is completed to ensure they are in safe operating condition before use to include an assessment of how visible the operating guidelines are to drivers. Check the following:
 - Battery
 - Tire condition
 - Steering system
 - Reverse alarm
 - Pedal operation
 - Headlight/taillight operation
 - Horn operation
 - Body and chassis
- All drivers have been provided a copy of the operator safety guidelines.
- Driver(s) has/have identified the location of the safety and warning labels.
- Operators have verbally acknowledged receipt and review of all safe operation guidelines.

Post-operation check list:

- All keys are removed and properly stored in a secured location.
- Following manufacturer guidelines, conduct a complete inspection of each vehicle for damage that may have occurred while in use. Take any damaged vehicle out of service until it is repaired.
- Carts have been parked in a designated area that is well-ventilated and away from ignition sources for recharging or refueling.
- All carts are secured to reduce the likelihood of unauthorized use.

¹ Daniel S. Watson, BS, Tracy J. Mehan, MA, Gary A. Smith, MD, DrPH, and Lara B. McKenzie, PhD, MA "Golf Cart-Related Injuries in the U.S." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Volume 35, Issue 1 (July 2008)

The information provided in this article is intended for general informational purposes only and should not be considered as all encompassing, or suitable for all situations, conditions, and environments. Please contact us or your attorney if you have any questions.

Sample golf cart safety wording that may be useful in building out your safe advisory notice

- Please take time to locate the safety and warning labels on this cart before operating.
- ***** Please note: That this is a golf cart and not an all-terrain vehicle (ATV). These vehicles operate differently and should not be driven in the same manner *****
- The maximum speed of a golf cart depends upon the terrain over which it is being driven, the weather conditions, and the total weight of the golf cart, passengers, and any equipment being carried. A golf cart should be operated at a speed equivalent to a quick walking pace. Use extra care on hills, wet turf, loose surfaces or rough terrain.
- Racing is strictly prohibited. This is a golf cart and not a race car.
- Do not start vehicle until all occupants are seated.
- **Avoid decreasing radius curves and sharp turns to the left.**
- To avoid tipping, drive slowly through turns and drive straight (and slowly) up and down slopes -- do not drive on the diagonal.
- Use caution when depressing the gas pedal. Partial depression of the pedal should occur when traveling downhill.
- Always give pedestrians the right of way.
- Observe the passenger limit (only 2 people allowed in a 2-person cart or 4 people allowed in a 4-person cart).
- Never allow passengers to stand on the rear of the golf cart.
- Occupants should remain seated and keep hands, arms, feet, and legs inside the cart.
- When the golf cart is not in use, place the golf cart in Neutral and remove the key.
- **Do not operate the cart while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or medications that may cause drowsiness.**
- When driving, maintain adequate distance between carts.
- No joyriding! Drive Friendly and remember golf cart safety is number one.
- Stop and listen for oncoming traffic before advancing quickly across roadways that are perpendicular to the flow of traffic.
- Stop and yield the right of way to motor vehicles at street crossings.
- If you are required to drive on roadways, operate this vehicle according to the rules of the road (staying to the right, yielding the right-of-way to vehicles with passengers, and no passing).
- Operators shall not use cell phones or other communications devices while driving.
- Golf carts do not provide protection from lightning. Seek appropriate shelter if lightning is present.