

SAFETY BULLETIN

GOLF CART SAFETY



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Golf Carts are not just for golf courses anymore. While they were originally created to transport golfers and their clubs from one hole to another, today, they are commonly used at sports and entertainment venues. Their convenience and flexibility make them an important component to a venue's operations. They are often used for short range transportation for patrons and employees, used to carry maintenance and landscaping equipment, used by security personnel as a part of a venue's security surveillance program, and even by medical services personnel to respond to first aid incidents and transport injured/ill patients. While Golf Carts may appear harmless, it is important to realize that these types of vehicles can be very dangerous when utilized inappropriately and without caution.

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SAFETY ISSUES WITH GOLF CARTS

Golf Carts are involved in a number of accidents each year that result in personal injury, death, and property damage. In fact, in a report by the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), it was found that Golf Cart related injuries occur in approximately 15,000 cases every year. Even more unsettling is the fact that children account for approximately one third of all injury victims. Golf Carts do not have the stability, maneuverability, or the safety features which them susceptible to accidents. The following are some of the safety issues associated with Golf Carts:

- **Tip Exposures** – due to their light weight, high center of gravity, and small tires, Golf Carts can easily tip over. When used in rough and uneven terrain, they can be even more prone to tipping over.
- **No Restraints** – many Golf Carts do not come equipped with seat belts or restraints for passengers. This increases the exposure of riders falling out of the car when in operation, which is the most common reason for injury and death.
- **Open Sides** – Golf Carts are designed for riders to quickly jump in and out. However, with no doors or sides to keep riders inside, passengers (especially young children) can easily be thrown from the vehicle.
- **Rear-Facing Seats** – Golf Carts with rear-facing seats pose a higher risk of falls. One study demonstrated that these cars can easily eject patrons while traveling as slow as 11 MPH.

OPERATING A GOLF CART

While Golf Cart designs may make them more prone to accidents, what is important to realize is that most of these accidents are preventable. In fact, most accidents are caused by driver mistakes and lack of good judgment. Within the context of sports and entertainment venues, common Golf Cart related accidents involve injuries sustained by spectators (pedestrians) being struck by a moving vehicle. The following are the most common causes of Golf Cart injuries and fatalities on a national basis:

- Overcrowding with too many passengers;
- Standing passenger(s) in car;
- Sharp turns (typically children being ejected from a sharp left turn);
- Passengers ejected from rear-facing seats;

- Reversing downhill;
- Leaving the brake unlocked upon exiting;
- Driving on wet or uneven terrain;
- Driver distraction (eating, drinking, cell phone usage); and
- Arms or legs hanging outside the car.

To prevent Golf Cart accidents, all employees must be trained before using the vehicles. This training should include the proper procedures for operating and maintaining the vehicles. The following are basic operating policies and procedures that should be implemented as part of a Golf Cart safety program.

- Allow only authorized employees to drive the cars. Authorized drivers should be currently licensed drivers.
- Drivers and passengers must remain seated while the vehicle is moving.
- Never exceed the number of available seats for the number of passengers.
- All vehicles should have seat belts, and the operator and all passengers should be restrained. *
- Consider using only vehicles with front-facing seats as cars with rear facing seats pose a higher risk of falls.
- Slow down and honk the horn at all intersections.
- Reduce speed when approaching pedestrians, who always have the right of way.
- Use the safety mirrors at each intersection to ensure pedestrian safety. In fact, venues should install parabolic mirrors at all intersections or corners throughout the lower level concourses to reduce blind spots
- Reduce speed when turning or passing through door ways.
- Do not park vehicles where they will block emergency equipment, pedestrian aisles, doorways, intersections, or the normal traffic flow.
- Vehicles should be operated at a speed equivalent to a well-paced walk, and no faster than 15 MPH.
- The actual 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.
- Avoid sharp turns.
- Only vehicles with headlights, tail lights, turn signals and windshields should be used after dark.
- Observe all state vehicle traffic laws such as lane travel, stop signs, legal passing of other vehicles, etc.
- All passengers should keep hands, arms, legs and feet within the confines of the vehicle at all times when the car is in motion.
- Never leave the keys in the vehicle when unattended.
- Never back up without looking to see what is behind the car.
- Never shift gears while the vehicle is in motion.
- When driving, maintain adequate distance between vehicles.

- Texting should never be done while driving! Pull over and stop if cell phone use is necessary.

Following the above operating rules will help reduce or prevent accidents. Venue operators should develop a written policy and use it to communicate these rules to all employees. Operators should be trained on the safety policies prior to being allowed to operate any vehicle. Additionally, all employees should be held accountable for the safe use of Golf Carts.

MAINTENANCE

Having a sound program in place to ensure that the venue's Golf Carts are properly maintained is also key. If not properly maintained, many critical parts such as brakes, parking brakes and tires can be worn, which can contribute to an accident. Vehicles should be inspected on a daily basis (prior to operation) and preventive maintenance inspections and repairs should be done in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. If the vehicle needs to be repaired, it should be immediately taken out of service. Employees should be trained to report any damage or required maintenance to a supervisor immediately. The following is a list of items that should be inspected prior to operation:

- Check the exterior and interior of the vehicle for damage.
- Check tires for proper inflation, excessive wear, cuts, or punctures.
- Check to confirm steering is normal.
- Check to confirm forward and reverse gears are operational.
- Check brakes for proper operation.
- Check headlights and brake lights.
- For gasoline vehicles, check the engine oil and fuel levels.
- Check for any indication of battery fluid leaks such as wet spots under the vehicle.

CONCLUSION

Golf Carts can be an important part of a venue's operation. Their wide variety of uses and flexibility provide countless benefits for venue operators. However, if neglected and not taken seriously, they can be very dangerous for both employees and venue spectators alike. While the design of many Golf Carts makes them susceptible to accidents, accidents are preventable. Developing a safety program that focusses on employee training and accountability, as well as a sound vehicle inspection and maintenance program, is an excellent way to protect employees and venue spectators from Golf Cart related accidents.

For more information on Golf Cart and PTV safety, visit the following websites:

- National Golf Cart Association's (NGCA)
<http://www.nationalgolfcarassociation.com/>
- Golf Cart Safety.Com
<http://www.golfcarsafety.com/>

If you or your staff have any questions concerning this important Safety Bulletin, please contact us today.



RICH POWERS, ARM

Executive Vice President, Risk Services
American Specialty Insurance & Risk Services, Inc.
rpowers@americanspecialty.com
260.755.7251 Direct
260.341.7989 Mobile