

Golf Cart Safety

Throughout the years golf carts have increased in popularity expanding their use from a simple means of navigating around golf courses. They are now used as a mode of transportation by employees involved in community services. They are also seen as a mode of transportation on some city streets or in residential developments.

The American Journal of Preventive Medicine recently reported that golf-cart injury rates increased more than 130% from 1990 to 2006. With the increase in their popularity and injuries associated with their use, specific safety training on the safe operation and maintenance needs to be incorporated into company safety discussions.

INSPECTION PROCEDURES

Cart inspection checklists should be completed to include but not be limited to applicable visible items such as tire pressure, fluid leaks, or cart damage. In addition, the functional aspects of the cart's safety devices should be checked such as steering, audible reverse alarm, and working brakes.

Report anything not in proper working order to your supervisor and take the cart out of service immediately until repairs are made by a qualified technician.

OPERATIONAL SAFETY

Golf carts operate at relatively slow speeds and this can cause employees to overlook safety procedures.

However, golf cart accidents can cause serious injury and even death. Many carts lack safety features such as seat belts, air bags, and roll over protection. That's why managers need to establish and enforce safety rules and communicate proper operating procedures to all employees to ensure safe operation of golf carts. Specific operational safety policies should include:

- Limiting cart use to authorized employees who have a valid driver's license
- Providing cart operation safety training to all operators when hired
- Retraining following an accident
- Limiting driver & passenger capacity to the manufacturers design and restrictions (i.e., two passenger, four passenger, etc.)
- Operating carts from the driver side at all times
- Maintaining body parts, such as hands, arms, & legs and feet within the cart at all times
- Remaining seated at all times when driving the cart
- Locking brakes before exiting the cart
- Ensuring carts come to a complete stop before getting in or out
- Operating carts in designated areas only
- Using caution when driving over steep or uneven terrain
- Approaching steep or uneven terrain vertically to avoid tipping over
- Slowing down when approaching corners or speed bumps and on public roads
- Slowing down when driving on inclines
- Using mirrors and turning to see behind the cart while driving in reverse
- Prohibit driving in reverse when traveling downhill
- Equipping carts with the necessary safety equipment, such as flags and lights to increase visibility

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- Drive defensively! Always be aware of your surroundings and keep your eyes on the path ahead of you

Additional safety measures to take when charging golf cart batteries include:

- Use only an approved battery charger
- Prohibit smoking in or around recharging stations
- Prohibit charging near open flames or other sources of ignition
- Wash skin immediately with cold water when coming in contact with battery acid
- Disconnect battery charger cord before using the cart
- Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment
- Have an eyewash station and shower near the charging operation

Following these operating rules will help you avoid or minimize golf cart accidents. Use a written policy to communicate these rules to all employees and make sure they understand the rationale for each guideline. Operators should be trained on proper safety procedures before being approved to use carts and re-trained immediately following any cart accident.