



Course closure policy - High Winds

Closure of course due to high winds

The club has a duty of care to all users of the course and as such has a clear policy regarding course closure and the discontinuation of play due to high winds.

Golfing in high winds presents significant risk to all users of the course, from being struck by flying debris, such as broken twigs, leaves or branches from trees as well as the increased risk of being struck by wayward or errant golf balls, which could potentially fly further and faster in windy conditions.

The policy is to be adhered to at all times. Failure to do so, will result in individuals being sanctioned in accordance with club rules for breach of club policies.

The directors of the club have adopted this policy considering their responsibilities towards users of the course they are responsible for, under the Occupiers' Liability Act.

Whilst the decision to suspend or abandon play will primarily be based on the objective parameters discussed below, this policy can only be considered a framework; the directors reserve the right to close the course, even if these parameters are not specifically met, where there is considered to be a risk of injury to people on the course.

1. Player responsibility

- **If the individual golfer feels the conditions unsafe or that they are putting themselves or other at risk, it is their responsibility to stop play.**
- Weather forecasting is not an absolute science and occasion may arise when the course is open, golfers are on the course and weather conditions deteriorate.
- Therefore the decision regarding play when winds are strong and the increased risks to safety that that presents, first and foremost, lies with the individual golfer, as they are putting themselves and others at risk.
- Wherever a golfer is on the course, they must assess whether they feel at risk of injury from flying debris or wayward golf balls and react accordingly.
- Golfers may wait to see if conditions improve. If conditions do not improve, golfers must cancel their round and their participation in competition, citing dangerous playing conditions as the reason.

2. Tee closures

- **Based on weather forecasts or prevailing conditions, if average wind speeds are forecast to be above 38 mph or Beaufort scale 8 or above, then the course will be closed and golfers are prohibited from venturing onto the course until the course is reopened.**
- Every effort will be made to notify golfers on the course, should the course be closed after the start of play. However, golfers on the course must recognize their own responsibilities, as described in clause 1 above.
- If and when a klaxon is deployed, golfers must recognize that this may not be audible in high winds.
- Responsibility for course closure decisions is to be taken by the most senior member of staff or committee present.
- Members must not apply pressure to members of staff, in this matter; this may be considered as intimidation and a breach of the club's staff anti-bullying policy.

3. Suspension of competition

R&A rules of golf - rule 5.7b clause 1.

(1) Immediate Suspension (Such as When There Is Imminent Danger). If the Committee declares an immediate suspension of play, a player must not make another stroke until the Committee resumes play. The Committee should use a distinct method of telling players about an immediate suspension.

- In the event of a club competition, an immediate suspension of play will be triggered by the designated Competition Secretary, this decision will be based on current and forecast wind speeds, as well as the actions of golfers.

- Once a significant number of participating golfers have decided that it is no longer safe to continue and start to come in off the course, the competition will be suspended or cancelled on the grounds that the course is deemed unplayable.
- This decision is taken by the designated competition secretary, based on the consensus and actions of a number of the participants.

4. Individual golfers in competition

Should, in accordance with the above, an individual player decide to stop playing on the grounds that they are concerned that they may be endangering other golfers, then the competition committee can allow this without cancelling the competition, provided they are contented that the individual did so out of genuine and appropriate concern for the safety of others.

If, because of bad weather, a player refuses to start at the time arranged by the competition committee or picks up during the round and the competition committee later cancels that round, the player gets no penalty as all penalties in a cancelled round are cancelled.

Where possible golfers will be warned about forecast high winds by the display of the following sign, when stronger winds are forecast, to ensure that golfers remain mindful of the additional risks golfing in high winds poses.



Sign from HS15 – Golfer Safety Awareness.pdf, part of the H&S Management System

Summary

- The directors of a golf club have a duty of care, to all golfers playing the course, to inform them of risks that may or may not be clearly obvious to the golfers.
- The directors should ensure that all reasonable steps are taken, to ensure that golfers are not subject to unnecessary risks. Therefore, trees and buildings on the property are periodically surveyed, to ensure that the risk of falling branches, roof slates etc. is kept to a minimum.
- In adopting this policy consideration has also been given to
 - the increased risk to golfers from wayward shots onto adjacent fairways (especially if visibility is restricted)
 - the increased risk to non-golfers (such as members or the public on footpaths) if impact injury from wayward golf shots.
 - the increased risk of impact injury or property damage, due to wayward shots over the course boundary and into adjoining properties or onto public highways.
 - the safety of greens staff, who are expected to work in high winds, by restricting golf. However, separate to this policy, the Course Manager / Head Greenkeeper will also adjust work plans to prevent staff being put at undue risk.
- In cases where the course remains open, golfers may be informed of forecasted high winds, before they venture onto the course. However, golfers (like all other members of the public) must be assumed to be aware of risks associated with venturing outside in high winds.

Measuring wind speed

- Anemometers, device to read wind-speed, are readily available on-line and hand-held versions can be purchased for as little as £20.
- The Met Office website metoffice.gov.uk will provide details of forecast wind speeds for any given postcode.
- Several free Apps are available, which supply current wind speeds; e.g. Weather Live or AccuWeather

What constitutes a 'high wind'?

When considering what constitutes high wind, it is important to note that you focus is on **Gust speeds as well as average wind speeds**, when deciding whether the course is safe or not. Often, damage is caused by excessive wind gusts, even when the underlying mean wind speed is not that high.

The following table provides information about the impact of winds at increasing speeds. Whilst originally intended for marine activities it does provide pertinent information, which the club uses to help define the course closure policy.

As can be seen, **wind speeds below about 25 mph (38 km/h)** should potentially be a cause for concern. Whilst golf will become increasingly difficult, it is unlikely that golfer will be at risk from flying debris or that balls will be blown significantly off course.

Wind speeds between 25 mph and approximately 38 mph are classed as medium risk and consideration given as to whether certain holes should be closed due to increased risk from falling branches and the risk of balls being blown onto adjacent properties or other golf holes – especially if visibility is restricted. Golfers should be informed, before teeing off, that the winds are strong and to take extra care.

Wind speeds above 40 mph or gale force 8+ should, automatically trigger a course closure. There will be significant risk of damage to trees and property, flying debris and little control of wayward golf shots.

The table below shows the Beaufort scale descriptors.

Beaufort Wind Scale				
Beaufort No. Force	Wind Speed		Description	Effects
	mph	km/hr		
0 to 5	0-24	0-38	Calm to Fresh Breeze	Up to "Small trees sway"
6	25-31	39-49	Strong Breeze	Large tree branches move, telephone wires begin to "whistle", umbrellas are difficult to keep under control.
7	32-38	50-61	Moderate or Near Gale	Large trees sway, becoming difficult to walk.
8	39-46	62-74	Gale or Fresh Gale	Twigs and small branches are broken from trees, walking is difficult.
9	47-54	75-88	Strong Gale	Slight damage occurs to buildings, shingles are blown off of roofs.
10	55-63	89-102	Whole Gale or Storm	Trees are broken or uprooted, building damage is considerable.
11	64-72	103-117	Violent Storm	Extensive widespread damage.
12	73+	118+	Hurricane	Extreme destruction, devastation.

Source www.MarineWayPoints.com