

# The Importance of Safe Tree Management for Golf Courses



While trees can add a lot to a golf course, tree management can be a source of stress. From stirring up emotions and controversies, to the risk of costly insurance claims, trimming or removing trees from a golf course is often a touchy subject.

But it doesn't have to be. Effectively managing the trees on your course can improve playing conditions, views, and air movement. With careful planning and attention, you can honor the course's history and vision while keeping it a pleasant—and safe—place to play.

## Tree Maintenance

The cost of properly maintaining a tree is lower than the cost of removing it, or the cost of an insurance claim related to a golfer getting injured. In addition to posing safety concerns, problematic trees can move turf, introduce pest problems, block sunlight, and damage greens.

Here are some things to consider regarding an effective tree maintenance plan:

- Your superintendent and crew should maintain a tree inventory and follow a regular schedule to keep trees thinned, pruned, and trimmed.
- The best time to prune your course trees is in the off season when golfers aren't around. Pruning during winter months does the least damage to a tree. And, if removing a tree may cause controversy due to historical or esthetic reasons, it may be easier to do so when club members are out of sight.
- If you must tend to a tree during season, send your crew out early in the morning, long before the first tee time.
- Don't wait too long to address issues. They will only become more difficult and costly to deal with.

Follow the guidelines outlined in the Occupational Safety & Health Administration ([OSHA](#)) [Tree Trimming & Removal Safety](#) guide from the United States Department of Labor. Here are some of the key recommendations regarding tree trimming:

- Assume all power lines are energized. Any tree trimming or removal within 10 feet of power lines should be done by an experienced professional.
- Don't trim trees during hazardous weather conditions.
- Perform a hazard assessment of the area before beginning work.
- Don't use a chainsaw or other equipment without proper training.
- Use personal protective equipment such as gloves, goggles, etc.

## Go With a Pro

If you have a well-equipped and well-trained grounds crew, you may be able to handle tree maintenance and removal in-house. But there also may be times when it's safer to hire a professional tree service.

Consider calling in a pro:

- When you need to use a chainsaw over your head.
- When your branches are near utility lines (see OSHA recommendations above).
- When you need to use a ladder or lift to reach the branch.
- When you need to remove an entire tree.

## Tree Removal

There are times when you simply have to remove a tree from your course. Whether it's infected with disease or simply blocking too much sunlight, the decision to remove a tree should not be taken lightly.

Decisions about tree removal should consider:

- Its impact on the soil and environment around it.
- Its impact on views across the course.
- Strategic flexibility and availability of optional lines of play.
- Historic traditions of the course.
- Player and staff safety.

If you decide to remove a tree, there are ways to offset the environmental damage. Felled trees can be made into woodchips or mulch, and their roots can be used for erosion reduction. With careful planning, you can also consider planting new trees on the course.

Need more ideas to minimize the risks of tree maintenance on your course? Reach out to our golf insurance experts at [info@vgminsurance.com](mailto:info@vgminsurance.com) or **800-362-3363**.

