

REAL-LIFE CLAIMS: WHEN THE GRASS ISN'T GREENER

The Property Exposure Your Club
May Not Have Considered



Introduction to the Case

Few people consider the sheer time and cost that comes with maintaining a pristine and playable green. The truth is, though, it takes a special combination of materials and care to meet the needs of the club's patrons and owners. Keep in mind, a well-designed green can cost **\$36,000** to reconstruct on average, and that doesn't even account for having to close the course during reconstruction.

A golf course is clearly a large investment, and it's important to remember that they are at the mercy of two hard-to-predict elements: mother nature and human nature. We see the damage mother nature can do on the news, but we rarely hear about the devastation that can be caused by a single person with ill intentions.

In the story below—based on an actual claim—you'll see through the eyes of a club owner as they take stock of damage left behind by a disgruntled superintendent whose employment was terminated. We'll then provide some best practices to help prepare and protect your club from this kind of exposure.

The Case: When the Grass Isn't Greener

You stand next to your general manager, Bertie. Neither of you speak looking out over the green on hole 16—or what used to be green anyway. An empty bottle of the club's glyphosate-based herbicide lies in a sand trap. Much of the green is now brown and dead. Holes that seem to have been made with a crowbar pock the rest of the area. It's not just ugly—it's unplayable.

You and Bertie keep your eyes fixed ahead. "Please tell me this is the only one," you say.

Bertie lets out a sigh. "There are eight others."

You're both silent again for a moment before you ask, "Is it just the back nine?"

"I'll show you," says Bertie, and the two of you head back to the golf cart. You head around to the other eight affected greens, seemingly picked at random for vandalism. All of them are hit with herbicide, though only one other was attacked with the crowbar. "We're pretty sure it was Larry," Bertie says.

"I know he wasn't happy about being let go, but do you really think he'd do this? And didn't we remove his access?"

"We took his keys," Bertie responds, "but he was the superintendent. He was authorized to make copies. Honestly, if someone wanted to bring their own out here, there's not much in place to stop them."

You nod weakly, now understanding just how exposed your investment really is. You always knew there was risk, but something like this just seemed so... unthinkable.

"So, what do you want to do?" Bertie asks.

"I don't really know yet. Let's head back to the office for now."

You try to think through what your next steps should be on the way back, but you quickly become overwhelmed and distracted by the amount of work and the cost of getting the greens up and running.

Pulling up to the office, you hop out of the cart and turn to Bertie. "Can you keep everyone off the course for now? I need to call my insurance agent. I'm hoping they'll help walk us through what to do next." You take a deep breath and walk inside.

PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS

Former employees can pose a huge risk to a course, as seen in the case above. On top of that, they can also be difficult to stop if they've really put their mind to causing damage to your business. After all, having been employed at the course, they know the ins and outs of the business and its vulnerabilities. Still, there are steps you can take to prevent or mitigate the damages from scenarios like these.

Secure Access and Security

Whenever any employee is terminated, it's important to remove their access to your facilities, your data, and your systems. The owner above did just that, but physical keys can be difficult to track. Consider using electronic locks with keycards or fobs that have unique IDs you can tie to employees if it's in the budget. These can track not only when a door was opened, but whose key opened it. You may also consider installing security cameras and alarms, if these are not already in place at your club, to alert the police or your security team in the event of a security breach at your facility.

Partner With an Expert

Perhaps more important than physically securing your facilities and chemicals is having a partner you can trust—one that understands your business and your clientele. This could be an insurance agent or a third-party contractor (be sure to read "[Real Life Claims: What Your Club Needs to Know Before Hiring Third-Party Contractors](#)" for more on that topic).

You're looking for someone who doesn't rush to the easiest—and potentially costliest—solution. Even in scenarios like the one above, you might be able to treat or resurface the area for **80%** less than it would take to do reconstruction. It might not be as pretty, but

you wouldn't have to close the course. Having someone who can help you weigh your options and pick the one that's best for you and your patrons is invaluable when disaster strikes.

Document, Document, Document

One of the most important risk management best practices is to have good documentation. In cases like the one above, you'll want to ensure you've documented the following:

- Personnel issues – Be sure you're keeping track of any actions and issues. This is vital should anything lead to an employee's termination.
- Security accesses – Document who has access to what and when access was granted or rescinded.
- Damages – Always carefully record damages you find, taking pictures whenever possible, and maintain a copy of the police report as well.

Contact Your Insurance Agent or Broker

When in doubt, contact your insurance agent or broker. As the owner above found out, dealing with vandalism on this level isn't easy. But that's why you have your agent or broker. They're in the business of protecting your business, so be sure to reach out to them with any questions and to ensure you have adequate coverage in place to protect you. The more they're involved in the risk management procedures at your club, the better.

For more information about how you can minimize the risk for your club, and to ensure you have the coverage you need, reach out to your Account Manager or contact us today at info@vgminsurance.com or **800-362-3363**.

