

Relief for Abnormal Course Conditions (specifically, Ground Under Repair)

This section is designed to provide Tournament Managers with guidance for how to address what the USGA Rules of Golf call 'Abnormal Course Conditions' at a Regional or Sectional Tournament. Specifically, this section is addressing how managers are to address 'rough' golf course conditions, the type typically associated with 'browned out', dirt patches, or other terrain troubles that make playing from certain areas of a golf course not reasonable. Generally, these areas are considered and marked as areas of 'ground under repair', but sometimes the affected areas are so great in size and number that marking them over an eighteen-hole course is impractical. **When this type of condition exists, the local rules committee can adopt a Local Rule that would provide players free relief from the abnormal course condition. And while the need to invoke this free relief occurs only in the rarest of circumstances, it's important to explain to managers, coaches, and players what the proper procedure is to follow when taking relief. Couple that need with the recent USGA and R&A revision to the rules of golf, and a review of that proper procedure is warranted.**

The Rules of Golf provide Local Rules Committees with model rules that can be used and/or tailored when deciding such a rule is warranted. The use of this Local Rule outside the fairway in the general area is not recommended as it may result in a player receiving free relief from areas where a ball might otherwise be unplayable (such as in areas of bushes or trees). *If a course is in such a condition, the Tournament Manager must contact the IHSA prior to implementing a local rule that would provide relief outside an area cut to fairway height or lower in the general area of the course.*

The Local Rules Committee may not implement this Local Rule once play has begun for a stroke-play round. Doing so would allow players who have more holes to play the advantage of using it for a longer period of time. The Local Rule could be implemented once a match has begun between the play of two holes as opponents have an equal benefit.

Guidelines for creating a Local Rule

Model Local Rule E-3

"When a player's ball lies in a part of the general area cut to fairway height or less [or identify a specific area such as 'on the fairway of the 6th hole'], the player may take free relief once by placing the original ball or another ball in and playing it from this relief area:

- **Reference Point:** Spot of the original ball.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** [Specify size of relief area, such as one club-length, one scorecard length or 6 inches] from the reference point, but with these limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
 - Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, and
 - Must be in the general area.

In proceeding under this Local Rule, the player must choose a spot to place the ball and use the procedures for replacing a ball under Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2e.

The Penalty for Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Local Rule: General Penalty Under Rule 14.7a."

Applying these guidelines could result in Local Rule such as this:

When a player's ball lies in a part of the general area cut to fairway height or less on the 4th, 7th, 8th, 12, 13th, 16th, and 18th holes, the player may take free relief once by placing the original ball or another ball in and playing it from an area not nearer the hole and in the general area of the fairway height location within one-club length of the reference point (i.e., the spot of the original ball). Refer to USGA Rules 14.2b(2) and 14.2c for clarification on how to replace a ball.

Notifying players about this free relief option before the round is necessary, and, if possible, should be a part of any player information sheet distributed to participants. It's important to note that simply telling players, for example, that, "You can bump the ball with your club no more than a club-length from a spot" is NOT allowable. The local rule for taking relief requires players to pick up and drop their ball (from knee height) in the relief area. Players should not be penalized for properly taking relief, and the local rules committee can not adopt a local rule that would deviate from the Rules of Golf.