



March 23, 2020

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Governor of the State of Washington  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

On behalf of the Golf Alliance of Washington and the nearly 275 golf courses in the state, we stand ready to do our part as local communities, states and the nation continue to respond to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We know that you have and will continue to be called upon to make difficult decisions in response to this crisis and we recognize that public safety is paramount.

In response to your recent Executive Order to be enacted this Wednesday, March 25, at 5:30pm, we are writing to respectfully request:

1. clarification on whether golf courses are intended to be available for use as outdoor exercise, and
2. that even if golf courses are to be closed for exercise, that golf course *maintenance* be designated as an essential business activity.

**Are golf courses available for use as outdoor exercise?**

Most golf courses in Washington have already closed their restaurant operations and banned any gatherings, either inside or outside their clubhouses. General Managers have been charged with enforcing social distancing rules on the grounds themselves, closing driving ranges, limiting use of practice greens and not allowing congregations of any kind.

Golf course operators all over Washington have been taking extra precautions to ensure playing golf is a safe experience that complies with all health advisories and recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control, including eliminating the use of rakes and water fountains, the removal of flagsticks and restricted use of carts. We are hearing loud and clear from our constituents that access to a golf course is a perfect respite for dealing both physically and emotionally with the trying times that we are in.

Recently, the Governors of the States of Oregon, California and Nevada have clarified their own Executive Orders to allow the continued use of golf courses despite the closing of non-essential businesses. For responsible reasons, and a demonstration of the industry's desire to police itself when circumstances suggest, some of the clubs and municipalities in these states still decided to close courses on their own for differing reasons.

**The designation of golf course maintenance as an essential business activity.**

Even if golf courses are to be closed for use, basic maintenance on the grounds cannot stop. If turfgrass is lost, many courses may face permanent closure. Any halt or delay in maintenance now will only accelerate the potential for significant turf loss on golf courses statewide in the weeks and months ahead. Additionally, without timely maintenance, these large green spaces can quickly become overrun with weeds and invasive species that can compound illness with large amounts of pollen and weed seed being released into the environment.

The golf industry is recommending that when it becomes necessary to close the outdoor golf courses to the public during the pandemic, golf course maintenance must be allowed to proceed during the shutdown. An average golf course of 150 acres is a living ecosystem requiring continued maintenance. Spring is a critical time for turfgrass, and it cannot be neglected for an extended period or it will be lost, and the community will lose a vital asset. In addition, performing required maintenance will deter trespassing and vandalism that could occur at an unmonitored property while also deterring pests, such as mosquitoes or ticks, which can quickly multiply in unmanaged areas of land causing a further public health threat.

We are supportive of our game and our members but not at the expense of what our state leadership dictates, so that is why we are requesting more clarification on your recent order. We are taking all necessary steps to keep maintenance staff safe by considering the health advisories and recommendations by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Practices such as social distancing, staggering staff work hours, mandatory glove wearing and sanitizing of hand tools are just some of the maintenance adjustments that the golf industry is proactively instituting.

Governor Inslee, thank you for your continued leadership and attention to this important matter during such trying times. We wish you all the best as you exercise judgment and wisdom to both protect and advance our communities.

Respectfully yours,

**Troy Andrew, CEO, WA Golf**

**Bill Ackerley, Exec Director, WWGCSA**

**Jeff Ellison, CEO, PNW Section PGA**

**Brian Coury, Exec Director, WWCPGA**

**Susan Rogers, Exec Director, CMAA (Evergreen)**

**Lori Russell, Exec Director, IEGCSA**

