



Saltburn-by-the-Sea Golf Club

Fog and Poor Visibility Policy

1 Introduction and Overview

The Club considers the safety of its members, visitors and employees as a top priority during inclement weather.

The Club has a duty of care to all users of the course and as such has a clear policy regarding the discontinuation of play due to lack of visibility. This will be typically due to either fog or darkness.

The policy must be adhered to at all times. Failure to do so, will result in individuals facing Club Disciplinary Proceedings as a breach of this policy is compromising the Health & Safety of others.

2 Player Responsibility

- 2.1 The decision regarding play when visibility is poor, first and foremost, lies with the individual golfer, as they are putting others at risk.
- 2.2 Wherever a golfer is on the course, they must assess whether they can see the clear distance of their intended shot; whether it is safe to play.
- 2.3 If the clear distance of their intended shot cannot be seen, the player must not play.
- 2.4 Golfers may wait to see if conditions improve. If visibility does not improve, golfers must cancel their round and their participation in competition, citing dangerous playing conditions as the reason.



Your responsibilities in poor visibility, e.g. FOG or DARKNESS:

- Do not continue to play in poor visibility, when you cannot see the clear distance of your intended shot.
- You will be putting others in danger.

3 Course Closure

- 3.1 If visibility from the clubhouse across the course, in any direction, is below 300 yards, then the course is closed and golfers are prohibited from venturing onto the course until the course is reopened. "Course closed" signs will be displayed on the Clubhouse entrance area and on the first tee.
- 3.2 Responsibility for this decision is to be taken by any of the following who are present at the Club:
 - a member of the Greens Team or
 - a member of the Professional's Team or
 - The Chair of the Greens Sub-Committee
- 3.3 Members must not apply pressure to members of staff, in this matter; this may be considered as intimidation and will result in individuals facing Club Disciplinary Proceedings.

- 3.4 The course shall be closed for poor visibility by the sounding of one long blast of the klaxon - it is mandatory that you cease play and leave the course. Players are reminded that in competition play, play must cease immediately and the following will apply:
- i. the competition will be suspended;
 - ii. each competitor will be required to stop play, to mark the position of their ball, lift the ball and then leave the course;
 - iii. any player continuing play after play has been suspended will be disqualified from the competition;
 - iv. the competition will be resumed only when it is safe so to do. If the Competitions committee does not consider it safe to resume play, the competition will be cancelled/abandoned.
- 3.5 The course shall be re-opened by the sounding of two shorter blasts of the klaxon.
- 3.6 If after the resumption of play it will not be possible to complete the competition due to lack of daylight or a decision is made that the fog and visibility will not improve for the foreseeable future or the competition shall be abandoned and may be re scheduled (see Clause 4).
- 3.7 Golfers who have not started their round will be provided with relevant information as to the prospects of possible further play, based on local weather details by either the Greens Team or by staff in the Pro's shop. In the event, that providing this information results in golfers missing their allotted tee time, every effort will be made to reschedule the booking at the soonest mutually convenient opportunity, by finding a vacant tee time. The tee times will not be shuffled backwards to accommodate those games which have not been able to start.
- 3.8 During a relatively short fog or poor visibility related delay (approx. half an hour), green fee-paying golfers who decide to abandon their round will not be eligible for a refund.
- 3.9 In the event that a visiting golfer's tee time cannot be rescheduled after a fog or poor visibility related delay, a refund will be offered.
- 3.10 It remains the responsibility of each golfer to recover/retrieve any equipment they have left on the course during a fog or poor visibility related delay when it is safe so to do.

4 Suspension of competition

R&A rules of golf - rule 6E clause 2.

“Visibility

It is recommended that, if landing areas are no longer visible to players (for example, due to fog or darkness), play should be suspended. Similarly, if players are unable to read the line of play on a putting green due to a lack of visibility, play should be suspended.”

- 4.1 In the event of a club competition, rule 6E(2) (see Appendix 2) will be triggered by the designated Competition Secretary, based on the actions of individual golfers, as per clause 1 or suspension of play as per clause 2 above.

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 This decision is taken by the designated Competition Secretary or Professional’s Team, based on the consensus and actions of a number of the participants.

5 Individual golfers in competition

- 5.1 Should, in accordance with clause 2 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.
- 5.2 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.

Date of Last Approval/Revision	Sept 2020
Review interval (years)	3 years
Date of next review	Sept 2023

Appendix 1 Implementation & Clarification advice from SGC's H & S Advisor

Player Responsibility

Primary responsibility for deciding to stop play lies with the individual golfer, as it is they who can determine whether they can see the full distance of their intended shot and whether they are putting anyone at risk by playing it. This approach also makes allowance for patchy fog, which may come and go. Golfers could temporarily suspend their round and wait to see whether visibility improves at the point on the course they are. Wherever they are on the course, from the 1st tee to the last, they must assess whether it is safe to hit the ball; whether they can see the clear distance of their intended shot. If they can't see, they should not play.

Golfers (e.g. category 1) who hit their shots a longer distance must be exceptionally mindful of the visibility conditions and cease playing when they realise they cannot see the ball at the end of their playing shot.

Many golfers only think about themselves and the group ahead - "We'll give them a few minutes and then tee off - they should be out of range!". They fail to consider all the other issues that bring people into range, such as: -

- Golfers losing balls or delayed for other reasons ahead
- Golfers walking back to the clubhouse, who won't walk around the holes in order but go for the shortest route.
- Greenstaff - If golfers refuse to adhere to your fog policy then you MUST pull greenstaff off the course in fog. As an industry, we justify having players and greenstaff operating in the same space because they can see each other. Take away the visibility and you are putting your staff at undue and unnecessary risk.

Suspension of Competition

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 can be suspended or cancelled on the grounds that the course can be deemed unplayable. This decision is therefore based on the actions of a number of the participants.

Note that this is very similar to suspending play in wet weather. The competition committee can decide to suspend or cancel a competition based on the evidence of participating golfers, who report that they are unable to continue playing due to waterlogged greens or fairways.

Individual golfers in competition

Should 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. An example might be a category one golfer, who hits the ball a significant distance, may decide to drop out of a competition due to visibility being restricted for their intended shots, whereas the majority of competitors would be perfectly safe to continue.

Rule 6E clause 5 is applicable here - "Player Refuses to Start or Picks Up Due to Weather Conditions

If, because of bad weather, a player refuses to start at the time arranged by the Committee or picks up during the round and the Committee later cancels that round, the player gets no penalty as all penalties in a cancelled round are cancelled." In such a case, it would be wrong for a Committee to disqualify a player who insisted on discontinuing play and cancelling their round, provided that the committee is satisfied that the golfer discontinued solely because the circumstances could be dangerous to other players if they had continued with their round.

6E - Suspensions and Resumptions

(1) Immediate and Normal Suspensions of Play

There are two types of suspensions of play that a Committee can order, each with different requirements for when players must stop play (see [Rule 5.7b](#)).

- Immediate suspension (such as when there is imminent danger). If the Committee declares an immediate suspension of play, all players must stop play at once and must not make another stroke until the Committee resumes play.
- Normal suspension (such as for darkness or unplayable course). If the Committee suspends play for normal reasons, what happens next depends on whether a group is between two holes or playing a hole.

The Committee should use a way of signalling an immediate suspension that is different than that used for a normal suspension. The signals to be used should be communicated to the players in the Local Rules.

See [Model Local Rule J-1](#) - Methods for Suspending and Resuming Play

When play is suspended, the Committee will need to evaluate if the players should be left in position on the course or brought in to the clubhouse.

Whether a suspension is immediate or normal, the Committee should resume play when it is possible to do so. Players will resume play from where they stopped (see [Rule 5.7c](#)).

(2) Deciding When to Suspend and Resume Play

Deciding when play should be suspended and then resumed can be difficult decisions for a Committee. A Committee should take the following guidelines into consideration:

Lightning

The Committee should use whatever means it has available to determine if there is a danger from lightning and take what actions it believes are appropriate. Players may also stop play on their own when they believe there is a danger from lightning (see [Rule 5.7a](#)).

When the Committee concludes there is no further danger from lightning and orders play to be resumed, players must resume play. See [Interpretation 5.7c/1](#) for what to do if a player refuses to start because he or she feels there is still a danger from lightning.

Visibility

It is recommended that, if landing areas are no longer visible to players (for example, due to fog or darkness), play should be suspended. Similarly, if players are unable to read the line of play on a putting green due to a lack of visibility, play should be suspended.

Water

If all the area around a hole is covered in temporary water and it cannot be removed, in stroke play the course should be considered unplayable and the Committee should suspend play under [Rule 5.7](#).

In match play, if the water cannot be removed, the Committee may suspend play or relocate the hole.

Wind

Several balls being moved by the wind may be a reason to suspend play, but only one or two balls moving due to the wind on one green would not usually merit the Committee suspending play. On the putting green there are Rules in place to help players avoid getting penalties or for being advantaged if the ball is blown closer to the hole or disadvantaged if the ball is blown farther from the hole (see [Rules 9.3](#) and [13.1](#)).

The Committee should consider suspending play due to wind only if there are several instances of balls moving and players are having problems with replacing the ball on the spot from which it was blown, or at least reasonably close to that spot if the ball will not remain at rest on the original spot.

(3) Resumption of Play

When play is to be resumed following a suspension, players will resume play from where they stopped (see [Rule 5.7d](#)).

The Committee should be prepared to consider the following:

- If players were evacuated from the course, whether players should be given time to warm up before resuming play.
- If the practice areas were closed during the suspension, when they should be reopened to give players sufficient time to get ready to play.
- How to get players back to their positions on the course.
- How to ensure that all players are back in position before resuming play. This might include having members of the Committee in position to observe and report when all players have returned.

(4) Whether to Cancel Round

Match Play

A match should not be cancelled once play has begun as both players in a match are playing in the same conditions, without one having an advantage over the other.

If the players stop play by agreement as allowed in [Rule 5.7a](#) or the Committee feels that conditions are such that play should be suspended, the match should resume from where it was suspended.

In a team competition, if some matches are completed while others cannot be completed on the arranged day due to poor light or weather, the Terms of the Competition should clarify how the complete and incomplete matches will be treated (see [Section 5A\(4\)](#)). For example:

- The result of completed matches stand as played and incomplete matches are to be continued or replayed on a later date,
- All matches are to be replayed, and each team is free to alter its original team, or
- Any matches that cannot be completed as scheduled are considered to be tied.

Stroke Play

In stroke play there is no set guidance for when a Committee should cancel a round. The proper action depends on the circumstances in each case and is left to the judgment of the Committee.

A round should be cancelled only in a case where it would be very unfair not to cancel it. For example, a small number of players begin a round under extremely bad weather conditions, conditions subsequently worsen and further play that day is impossible, but when play will resume the next day the weather is ideal.

When a round is cancelled, all scores and penalties during that round are cancelled. That would normally include any disqualification penalty, but, if a player is disqualified for a serious misconduct (see [Rule 1.2](#)) or for a breach of the Code of Conduct, that disqualification should not be cancelled.

(5) Player Refuses to Start or Picks Up Due to Weather Conditions

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

(6) Removal of Temporary Water or Loose Impediments from Putting Green

If temporary water, sand, leaves or other loose impediments accumulate on a putting green during a round, the Committee may do what is necessary to remove the condition, for example by using a squeegee, or by brushing or blowing the putting green. It is not necessary for the Committee to suspend play to take these actions.

In such cases, the Committee may, when necessary, get the help of players to remove the loose impediments or sand. However, a player is in breach of [Rule 8.1](#) if he or she removes temporary water on the line of play without the Committee's permission.

A Committee may adopt a policy that clarifies what actions are considered appropriate for a Committee member, someone designated by the Committee (for example, a member of the maintenance staff), or players, to remove temporary water on the putting green.

See [Model Local Rule J-2](#): Model Local Rule for Allowing Temporary Water on Putting Green to be Removed by a Squeegee.

(7) Match Begun in Ignorance Course Closed

If players begin a match when the course is closed and the Committee then learns of their action, the match should be replayed in its entirety as play on the closed course is considered null and void.