



The Value of a Written Environmental Policy for Golf Facilities

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A recent survey of over two hundred golf course superintendents from around the country revealed that over three-quarters of golf facilities lack a written environmental policy. An environmental policy is a statement of an organization's commitment to protecting the natural environment. It's at the heart of an environmental management system (EMS) and the starting point to work towards environmental excellence.

For instance, the establishment of an environmental policy by top management is the first requirement of the international environmental management system standard, ISO 14001—the world's most established and well-respected environmental management platform for business. According to the standard, an environmental policy directs goals, responsibilities, and the establishment of performance against which management should be judged. Top management is responsible for the initiation of the policy and for providing leadership, but the entire organization must adhere to the policy. As such, an environmental policy for a golf facility should:

- Reflect an ethical basis for actions
- Account for regulatory requirements
- Show commitment to continual improvement
- Be in line with other policies used within the company (quality)
- Be clear and concise and known by all levels within the organization
- Be available—at the clubhouse and online
- Strive towards sustainable development
- Set for publication of environmental objectives
- Satisfy the requirements of third parties such as your members, golfers, and neighbors.
- Be updated when needed

All significant products and services should be considered. Compliance with legal requirements, pollution prevention aims, and the need for continual improvement should be included in the environmental policy. The policy must be in writing and must be effectively communicated to all employees and used in employee training. A basic environmental policy can be developed using the steps below:

1. Brainstorm a list of action words or very short phrases that reflects your golf course or club's environmental commitment to your employees, members, golfers, and the community.
2. Put those words and phrases together into a one or two sentence statement.
3. List the ways that you plan to achieve the commitment(s) expressed in the statements.
4. Use that list to create a statement of how your golf facility will fulfill its environmental commitment(s).
5. Combine the statements you developed above and fine tune them to make your complete environmental policy. (Keep in mind the bulleted points above when writing your statement.)

You can also use existing tools and templates to develop your environmental policy. To see an example of how to develop an Environmental Policy using the e-par Environmental Management System for Golf visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohROHeUnKJU>.