

# Rule Tip of the Week

## All Hail!

Over the past few weeks, the PGA Tour has encountered some unusual weather conditions along the west coast. But the wacky weather of the 2019 winter has not been limited to California. In fact, this week in Albuquerque, New Mexico, golfers have been bundled up shoveling away snow instead of shooting at flagsticks. If you happen to be indoors suffering from “cabin fever” and are looking for something to do besides watching the Golf Channel and/or the Weather Channel, here’s an “all hail” True-False quiz to test your knowledge of how the Rules are applicable in all weather conditions. Extra points if you can figure out where the snowman in the photograph was spotted playing golf!



While playing in a tournament, a freak hail storm passes over a remote corner of the course and pummels your group with golf ball size hail for about ten minutes. Fearing for your safety, your group stops play and, without marking the location of your ball in the fairway, you dash to seek shelter under some nearby trees. Meanwhile, unaware of the storm until it is over, the Committee does not sound the siren to suspend play.

1. You are not permitted to temporarily stop play under these circumstances because the Committee did not first sound the siren to suspend play.
2. While searching for your ball in the fairway somewhere among the hailstones, if you accidentally nudge your ball while sweeping aside the hailstones with your feet, you incur a one-stroke penalty.
3. After accidentally moving your ball during the search, if you do not know the original spot of your ball, you must estimate that spot and drop your ball as near as possible on that spot.
4. In preparation for your next stroke, you may remove any of the hailstones that interfere with your stance or the area of your intended swing. You may also deliberately leave a hailstone in place near your ball to help you with your alignment.
5. After successfully playing your approach shot to the putting green, you may repair hail damage on the putting green without penalty.
6. On the putting green, you may remove hailstones that interfere on your line of play, and you may also leave hailstones beyond the hole that may serve as a backstop for your ball in case it rolls beyond the hole.



### Answers:

1. **False** *Voluntarily stopping play for hail is not specifically mentioned in the Rules. However, Rule 20.3 [Situations Not Covered by the Rules] states, “Any situation not covered by the Rules should be decided by the Committee ... [c]onsidering all the circumstances, and ... [t]reating the situation in a way that is reasonable, fair and consistent with how similar situations are treated under the Rules. Rule 5.7a [When Players May or Must Stop Play] allows a player to stop play if he or she reasonably believes there is danger from lightning, but the player must report the stoppage to the Committee as soon as possible. Thus, you would not be penalized for stopping play for the hail so long as you reported your reasonable actions to the Committee as soon as possible after stopping play.*
2. **False** *According to Rule 7.1 [How to Fairly Search for Ball], in trying to find and identify your ball, you may move loose impediments, i.e., the hail. Also, Rule 7.4 [Ball Accidentally Moved in Trying to Find or Identify It] points out, “There is no penalty if the player’s ball is accidentally moved by the player, opponent or anyone else while trying to find or identify it.”*
3. **False** *Per Rule 7.4, if your ball is accidentally moved during a search, the ball must be replaced on its original spot. If the original spot is not known, the spot must be estimated and the ball must be placed on that spot in accordance with Rule 14.2 [Replacing Ball on Spot].*
4. **True** *Rule 8.1 [Player’s Actions That Improve Conditions Affecting the Stroke] specifically states that it does not apply to the removal of loose impediments which is allowed to the extent provided in Rule 15. Rule 15.1a [Removal of Loose Impediment] advises, in part, “Without penalty, a player may remove a loose impediment anywhere on or off the course, and may do so in any way (such as by using a hand or foot or a club or other equipment). Rule 10.2b(3) [No Setting Down Object to Help in Taking Stance] advises that a player must not set down an object to help him or her in lining up his or her feet or body. However, this Rule does not prohibit a player from using an object that is already in position to assist in taking his or her stance. See Interpretation 8.1d(1)/2 [Player Is Entitled to Have Loose Impediments or Movable Obstructions Left Where They Were When Ball Came to Rest].*
5. **True** *According to a Clarification issued by the USGA to Rule 13.1c(2) [Improvements Allowed on Putting Green: Repair of Damage], damage on the putting green caused by hail may be repaired.*
6. **True** *Again, see refer to Rule 15.1a for the removal of loose impediments on the putting green, and Interpretation 8.1d(1)/2 [Player Is Entitled to Have Loose Impediments or Movable Obstructions Left Where They Were When Ball Came to Rest].*

**Bonus:** Our friendly snowman is playing the 18<sup>th</sup> hole at The Old Course at St. Andrews.