

Local Rule for Accidental Movement of a Ball on a Putting Green

Rule 18-2 provides for a one-stroke penalty if a player causes his ball in play to move, unless certain exceptions apply. Decision 18-2/0.5 explains that when it is uncertain what caused a ball to move, all relevant information must be considered and the weight of the evidence must be evaluated. If it is more likely than not that the player caused the ball to move, the player incurs a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2 and the ball must be replaced. Otherwise, the player incurs no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies unless some other Rule applies (e.g. Rule 18-1).

Starting 1 January 2017, a Committee may adopt a Local Rule that modifies Rule 18-2 by providing that there is no penalty if a player accidentally causes his ball on the putting green to move. For consistency, this Local Rule also modifies Rule 18-3 to eliminate the similar penalty in match play when an opponent accidentally causes the player's ball on the putting green to move.

As a related issue, this Local Rule also modifies Rule 20-1 by providing that there is no penalty if a player or his opponent accidentally causes the player's ball-marker on the putting green to move.

If a Committee wishes to introduce such a Local Rule, the following wording is recommended:

"Accidental Movement of a Ball on a Putting Green

Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1 are modified as follows:

When a player's ball lies on the putting green, there is no penalty if the ball or ball-marker is accidentally moved by the player, his partner, his opponent, or any of their caddies or equipment.

The moved ball or ball-marker must be replaced as provided in Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1.

This Local Rule applies only when the player's ball or ball-marker lies on the putting green and any movement is accidental.

Note: If it is determined that a player's ball on the putting green was moved as a result of wind, water or some other natural cause such as the effects of gravity, the ball must be played as it lies from its new location. A ball-marker moved in such circumstances is replaced."