

Dangerous Situations

March Rule of the Month

The rules of golf provide that a player may obtain relief from a dangerous situation. There are several such situations identified in the Decisions on the Rules of Golf. Decision 1-4/10 identifies situations where a player's ball comes to rest near a live rattlesnake or bees' nest. The Decision states that it is unreasonable to expect a player to play from such a dangerous situation or, where a ball lies in a hazard, to incur a penalty under a rule (Rule 26-Water Hazard, Rule 28-Unplayable Ball) to obtain relief from a dangerous situation. So, in equity, as an additional option, the player may without penalty drop a ball on the nearest spot not nearer the hole that is not dangerous. If the ball lay in a hazard, it should be dropped in the same hazard if possible or in a nearby similar hazard, not nearer the hole. If it is not possible to drop a ball in a hazard, the player may use the relief options available under Rule 26 or 28 under penalty of one stroke or drop the ball outside the hazard keeping the point where the original ball lay between the hole and where the ball is dropped.

Rattlesnakes and bees are not the only dangerous situations a player might encounter. Alligators present a dangerous situation as do fire ants. Fire ants are specifically addressed in Decision 33-8/22. That decision states that a local rule would be justified allowing a fire ant mound to be treated ground under repair. Absent a local rule, in equity, a player may take relief as described in 1-4/10.

What about poison ivy, cactus, stinging nettles? Decision 1-4/11 considers these to be unpleasant conditions which are common occurrences which players must accept. Except in a water hazard, the player may declare the ball unplayable and take relief as described in Rule 28 under penalty of one stroke.