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To: **ALL MANUFACTURERS**

Consideration of Change in Interpretation of Rule 14-3 for Distance-Measuring Devices

The “Note” contained within Rule 14-3, permitting the adoption of a Local Rule allowing use of certain distance-measuring-devices (DMDs), which includes mobile applications, has been in effect since 1 January 2006. Prior to that date, the Rules of Golf strictly prohibited a player from using any artificial device or unusual equipment for the purpose of gauging or measuring distance or conditions that might affect his play.

Since introducing the “Note” to Rule 14-3, The R&A and the USGA have applied a narrow approach to define what devices may be used under the Local Rule. The current approach stipulates that a device is permissible for use under the Local Rule only if the sole functionality of the device is to measure distance. If the device has additional functionality to gauge or measure other conditions (e.g., wind speed, wind direction or elevation change) that might affect the player’s play, whether or not the additional functionality is used, the player is disqualified under Rule 14-3 if he uses the device to measure distance. This applies even if any non-permitted functions (a) can be switched off or disengaged, or (b) are switched off or disengaged. Appendix IV, Section 9 further explains the application of these principles to the use of a multi-functional device, such as a smartphone or PDA, that contains a distance measuring application.

Since 2006, The R&A and the USGA have responded to numerous enquiries from manufacturers, Rules Officials and players regarding the application of Rule 14-3 and the Local Rule permitting the use of DMDs. Many of these enquiries have raised the point that, in all other circumstances, a breach of Rule 14-3 only arises when the player uses equipment in a manner that is prohibited by a provision of Rule 14-3. Therefore, as a part of the normal, quadrennial review of the Rules of Golf, The R&A and the USGA are considering a change to the Rules and interpretations regarding use of DMDs under the Local Rule to provide that a player who uses a device to measure distance is only in breach of Rule 14-3 if he actually uses that device for a prohibited purpose (i.e., by using a non-permitted function that might assist him in making a stroke or in his play or for the purpose of gauging or measuring conditions that might affect his play).

The purpose of this Notice is to alert manufacturers of DMDs that the governing bodies are reconsidering the current position and may adopt the revised approach described above. Any changes to Rule 14-3 and its interpretations with respect to DMDs, if adopted, would be effective from 1 January 2016, and could result in changes to the permissibility of existing products, as well as the requirements for future DMD designs. Additionally, the governing bodies anticipate that updated guidelines for multi-functional DMDs would be developed and circulated.

Should you have any questions regarding the above, please e-mail Claire Bates, Assistant Director – Equipment Standards, at clairebates@randa.org