



## Hot Topics in Safety for Camp Programs

**Challenge Courses** - Courses should be installed by a reputable vendor that follows ACCT guidelines. Courses should be inspected annually by an outside party and regularly by staff. Staff should maintain thorough inspection logs for course elements and equipment. Signage should be posted to warn and inform. Staff should be trained annually with their certifications kept in personnel files. Written safety guidelines should be developed and reviewed with participants. Belay system should provide for "Tie in" of belayers with appropriate size and weight ratios being maintained.

**Cyber-Behavior** – Internet use has become a growing issue for Camps. Staff must be trained to protect themselves and the Camp from contact with campers via email and messaging; there should be no contact between staff and campers. Staff should ensure that their networking site profiles (MySpace, Facebook, etc.) are password protected and private.

**Emergency Procedures** - Camp should have a written plan, known and available to all staff, for the security and protection of all campers. There should be an emergency system for securing outside medical, fire, rescue, and police assistance. A written site-specific emergency plan that addresses emergency situations, lost campers, lightning and natural disasters should be reviewed annually and included in staff training/orientation. Emergency procedures should be rehearsed at least once each session and the results documented. Plans should be in place for all off-site activities and trips.

**Equestrian Programs** - All participants and staff should wear personal protective equipment such as helmets and appropriate footwear. Staff should be trained by a recognized body with their credentials kept on file. All animals should be healthy, inoculated and their records maintained on site. Participants should be matched to an animal that is appropriate for their skill level. Good risk transfer practices should be utilized with participants, groups and/or contracted services.

**Forest Management** - The maintenance and control of the Camp's trees, shrubs and soil should be reviewed and included in the Camp's master plan. Pruning and removal of tress must be performed regularly to prevent injuries and destruction of property. Preventive measures should be put in place to control poisonous plants. Buffers around buildings can help prevent damage from storms and fires.

**Health Procedures** – The Camp's supervising physician should review written health care policies and procedures for each type of camp operation annually. Procedures for the use of inhalers and "Epi" pens should be developed in conjunction with the physician's standing orders, ACA and local guidelines. The Camp health care policy should address food allergies and special dietary requirements. Hand washing and sanitizing can help in the prevention of communicable disease, particularly in cabins and dining areas.



**International Staff** – Staff training should include discussions of cultural differences and child abuse prevention. Placement organizations that provide police background checks should be utilized for staff recruitment. International staff should only be allowed to drive camp vehicles if they hold a valid US driver's license and have been trained by the Camp or other agency. Language barriers may inhibit communication during training and with campers.

**Leadership Development Programs-** Participants should be considered program participants and not junior or adjunct staff members with appropriate staff to camper ratios maintained for the program. It is crucial to have in place program goals, philosophies and plans to ensure proper content and development of campers. Program participants should not be utilized to supervise other campers or be counted into staffing ratios. Mentoring by or Shadowing with trained supervising-counselors is appropriate when training and ages are considered.

**Maintenance areas** - Maintenance areas are a problematic area for most camps. Storage of combustibles and flammables, MSDS, PPE, maintenance logs, equipment use, hazardous training for staff, clutter are some common areas of concern.

**Signage** - Natural hazards, speed limits and area of "Off Limits" should be clearly posted to protect campers, staff and users from injury. Safety rules and warnings should be posted at critical program areas such as waterfronts, ranges and challenge courses. Maintenance and program areas should signage to discourage unauthorized use.

**Staff Certifications** - Program staff should have documented training credentials for higher risk programs, such as aquatics, equestrian, challenge courses and range programs. All waterfront staff should pass a qualifying performance exam prior to the start of camp.

**Water Craft** - Documented maintenance logs should be kept on all motorized craft. Watercraft should be secured against unauthorized use. Waterfront procedures should include standards for communication to watercraft, lifeguard placement and ratios, use of PFDs and emergency procedures.

*Other topical resources for camp programs are available from the Safe-Wise Consulting electronic library.*