

# Safety Insights<sup>SM</sup>

## Safety & Risk Management News & Notes

VOLUME NUMBER 1 — ISSUE 2

### *YMCA National Aquatics Safety Conference Call a Success*

Kent Johnson, COO of the YMCA of the USA hosted the YMCA National Aquatic Safety Conference Call on Wednesday, June 13<sup>th</sup>. The call provided information and guidance for improving aquatic safety throughout the YMCA Movement.

Safe-Wise Consulting supplied valuable assistance and logistical coordination in the production of the call, including having Chris Mogridge, Senior Consultant, participate in the call as a guest aquatic expert. Other guests on the call included John Medler, President of YMCA Services Corporation; Kevin Trapani, President of the Redwoods Group; Kay Smiley, Aquatic Specialist for YUSA, and Gareth Hedges, Aquatic Safety Specialist with the Redwoods Group.

The call focused on Ten Strategies for Preventing Aquatic Accidents with a goal of “No Drownings at YMCAs”. These strategies are:

1. Lifeguards are always Rescue Ready
2. Lifeguards are always actively scanning – following the 10/10 rule, from bottom to top
3. Lifeguards are always properly positioned – edge of pool and elevated lifeguard stands
4. Lifeguards follow an effective Zone Coverage plan
5. The lifeguard schedule allows for breaks - encourages rotation and keeps guards alert
6. Monitoring practices are in place and followed – quick checks, greeting guards, regular observation
7. A program of regular drills is established and practiced – red ball, silhouette, red cap
8. Monthly in-service training is conducted
9. Swim testing is conducted for all participants – especially special events
10. Y Leadership is committed to aquatic safety – focus on and communicate the importance of aquatic safety at your Y – creating a culture of safety - Pledges

More information about the call, including a copy of the script, is available at the Y Exchange Website. Safe-Wise Consulting's *Ready-Guard* program will help build safe aquatic practices that are both practical and sustainable at your YMCA. When properly implemented, *Ready-Guard* will assist your YMCA to meet the goal of “No Drownings at YMCAs”. ♦

### **A Silent Problem**

Breath-hold activities such as prolonged underwater breath-hold diving, breath-hold competitive training and recreational breath-hold games are sometimes popular but have serious dangers. Significant dangers associated with these activities include brain damage and death by drowning. Breath-hold activities have contributed to a number of aquatic incidents at YMCAs over the past few years.

Hyperventilation often precedes breath-holding and is also very dangerous. Even taking a series of deep rapid breaths to increase oxygen may indeed allow individuals to hold their breath longer, but may also have serious consequences. Not maintaining the proper level of oxygen in the bloodstream can cause an individual to pass out before the body knows it is time to breathe. If this happens underwater and the body takes a breath instinctively while unconscious, water rushes in and drowning begins.

Lifeguards must scan and watch for people who are hyperventilating. They must look out for and stop any breath-holding activities.

The YMCA of the USA Medical Advisory Committee has issued a statement about breath-holding activities that encourages YMCAs to strongly discourage these dangerous practices. ♦

## Checking Driving Records

Obtaining motor vehicle records (MVRs) and using them to help determine who will be allowed to drive on YMCA business can be a very effective risk control procedure. Ys must be cautious to ensure that various privacy laws are not violated when obtaining this information. MVRs are classified as consumer reports. Therefore, the use of these MVR reports must comply with Federal and State laws including the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), the Driver's Privacy Protection Act and the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act.

The "Fair Credit Reporting Act," protects an individual's private information from being misused by companies; including setting standards for handling MVRs.

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## Risks on the Internet

Forty-five percent of children in the United States, more than 30 million of those younger than 18, use the Internet, according to NetSmartz.org. The youth and young adult culture has embraced the cyber-age and perhaps exposed themselves to a number of risks and dangers.

Along with the useful and educational information available on the Internet, a great deal of content exists that is not appropriate for children. This content can include nudity or other sexually explicit material; hate group or racist web sites; promotional material about tobacco, alcohol, or drugs; graphic violence; information on satanic or cult groups; or even recipes for making bombs or other explosives.

Child pornography is frequently exchanged via the Internet, and sexual predators can use the Internet to try to reach out to children for sexual purposes. Children could be targets of cyber-stalking or harassment that includes repeated and unwanted contact through the Internet that is rude or threatening.

Sexual predators frequent various chatrooms looking for children. These predators target likely victims, make contact, and work to develop friendship, emotional reliance, and interest in sexual topics. He or she may initiate offline sexual relations quickly or spend months "grooming" the child towards a sexual relationship. Sexual predators may use material goods, such as compact disks and games, to attract children offline.

YMCAs, youth centers and camps that allow youth Internet access must manage and control this activity. It is also important to include educational activities in these programs that help to build strong children by increasing their awareness of Internet dangers and preparing them to protect themselves and utilize this expansive resource effectively.

In addition, YMCAs must discuss Internet use with staff to ensure that use is appropriate and that they also understand how their personal presence on the Internet through sites such as MySpace and FaceBook may reflect back on the YMCA.

For assistance in developing both a strong child abuse prevention program that includes information about Internet use and staff behavior codes, please contact Safe-Wise Consulting. ◆

### **RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT:**

**NetSmartz.org** is a Internet site produced by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America that provides Internet safety resources for youth, parents and communities. ◆

# Start Preparing for When the Wind Blows

The 2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season has begun. Experts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center forecast a 75-percent likelihood of 13 to 17 named storms.

If YMCAs and employees have not already begun seasonal preparations, they should start now by focusing on the following list of suggestions.

- ◆ Develop a written plan for protecting the Y, staff and members in the event of a hurricane
- ◆ Consider making provisions for staff who need to leave duty or not attend shifts
- ◆ Stock food, water, extra personal medications, and other emergency supplies for residents, child care and camps programs
- ◆ Follow the instructions of officials concerning emergency actions including evacuations

Hurricane planning resources are available through local, State and Federal departments including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. ◆

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## A Place for Your Stuff

A recent article in *PC Today* focused on the options for storing and backing-up data online. These two practices are extremely important to control data theft, an issue which has been a problem for some Ys in the past two years.

Data kept at your Y is susceptible to theft or damage, whether it is a tape, disk, flash or even a computer. Online backup and storage services provide a place for you to store data offsite. Ys can transfer files to and from the service via an Internet connection, and the service provider secures your data with protections such as encryption and their own backups of your stored data.

A variety of services exist for saving and retrieving data online. Online backups provide automatic backup services that you can control manually or that will automatically save data. Online storage services simply store the files you select and upload them to a remote site. Other services such as file sharing and collaboration capabilities are also available.

There are many choices for online backup and storage services. If your Y is interested in these options, you should spend time doing a little research, networking with colleagues and exploring the Internet to find which service is best for you. Data is a valuable asset to YMCAs, and good risk management practices will keep your data safe and secure. ◆

## Protecting Your Volunteers

Many volunteers have concerns about how their volunteer affiliation with an organization will affect them personally in the case of lawsuits or legal action. Protections vary by state and insurance coverage. Whether it is a Good Samaritan Law, Volunteer Immunity or Charitable Immunity, there are both significant and subtle distinctions when applied to volunteer service to YMCAs.

The Non-Profit Risk Management Center provides some guidance for YMCA leaders in its publication "*State Liability Laws for Charitable Organizations and Volunteers*". This informative piece is available by free download from [www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org) ◆

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### *Driving Records* continued from page 2

Sharing MVR information with an employer without the permission of the employee could create a liability issue for an insurance agent. Because of this challenge, many agents will no longer provide MVR reports to YMCAs. Ys may obtain MVRs through online services, a payroll company, the motor vehicle department in their state or even require drivers to supply the report themselves.

Safe-Wise Consulting recommends that Ys screen the records of all drivers using YMCA vehicles and also screen the records of all staff driving any vehicle for YMCA use. MVRs should be obtained prior to initial vehicle use and be updated on an annual basis. These records should become part of a staff member's permanent file. ◆

## Texas Mandates AEDs

The Texas University Interscholastic League became the first state association in the US to require AEDs at events; this regulation takes effect in August. The league's move is only one of many across the US in the trend to require schools, fitness facilities and other organizations to equip themselves with this important lifesaving device.

The YMCA of the USA Medical Advisory Committee has recommended for several years that Ys have an AED available. While many Ys have complied with this recommendation and the current trends, some facilities and camps still lag behind.

Safe-Wise encourages all YMCAs to obtain AEDs and keep staff current and trained in their use as an important risk management and safety practice. ♦

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## OSHA Updates Standards on Personal Protective Equipment

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is revising the personal protective equipment (PPE) sections in several standards, including its general industry standard which applies to YMCAs. The proposed changes affect standards recommending the use of protective devices for the face, eyes, the head and feet. The agency is seeking public comments on these changes until July 16, 2007.

These proposed revisions are a continuation of OSHA's effort to update references to specific consensus and industry standards located throughout the agency's standards. The proposed revisions replace the existing references to specific, out-of-date consensus standards with performance language that requires PPE to be constructed in accordance with good design standards. The proposed revisions include appendices that may be used to identify good design standards.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure the safety and health of America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards; providing training, outreach, and education; establishing partnerships; and encouraging continual process improvement in workplace safety and health. For more information, visit [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

Common areas of use where these standards apply in YMCAs are maintenance and housekeeping staff, camp maintenance and kitchen staff, aquatic maintenance staff, staff using power equipment, equestrian staff and high ropes and/or adventure staff.

Safe-Wise Consulting's *Safe-Staff* program is designed to help YMCAs follow OSHA guidelines, control workers compensation insurance costs and, most importantly, create a culture of safety among staff and thus reduce the frequency and severity of accidents. ♦

### **RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT:**

#### **OSHA Posters and Publications: Free for the Asking**

Advertisements suggesting that OSHA workplace posters must be purchased from private companies may be misleading YMCAs. Official posters-such as the new OSHA *Job Safety and Health: It's the Law* poster (available in both English and Spanish) are available at no cost by visiting the publications page on the agency's Web site, [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) or by calling the publications office at (202) 693-1888. State compliance posters are also often available from your state's Department of Labor at no cost. ♦