

# Safety Insights<sup>SM</sup>

## Safety & Risk Management News & Notes

VOLUME NUMBER 1 — ISSUE 4

### *Trends in Risk Management*

Ann Feeney at the Research and Planning Department of YMCA of the USA recently posted a number of trends in risk management at YMCAs. This information is provided below and offers interesting insight to what is currently happening in the movement.

Twenty years ago, there were six dedicated YMCA risk managers; now that number has multiplied almost five-fold. There's probably a similar increase in the number of individuals who have risk management as a major part of their job duties and work day, but who don't have a specific risk management title.

As Ys are increasingly likely to have programs involving the Web, such as computer labs or multimedia projects, they're spending more attention to safe and appropriate use of Web access for youth. Ys also need to educate their staff about the importance of not having outside contact with youth participants; because IM and email are so natural to many young adults, in particular, they may not make the connection that this also constitutes outside contact. Ys are also examining the potential consequences of staff or volunteers posting to Websites or Blogs about their personal or their YMCA experiences. Too rigorous a policy can alienate staff or volunteers, while not attending to this issue can put the Y in a bad light or even create legal liability if, for example, a staff member or volunteer has a posting that describes unsavory or dangerous personal habits.

Many Ys have experienced the loss of member data, usually through the loss or theft of a laptop. All staff should consider preventing data theft to be part of their jobs.

Particularly as society is aging, it's increasingly vital for YMCAs to regularly practice emergency response procedures, including the use of AEDs and supplemental oxygen. Each year, more YMCA member's lives are saved, or they are protected from greater damage from heart troubles, through the prompt and appropriate use of an AED.

Worker's Compensation premium costs are rising in many states. The only way to reduce the cost—as well as to practice responsibility towards staff and volunteers as well—is to reduce the number of employee accidents and injuries. YMCAs need to continue emphasizing employee and volunteer safety training and accident prevention. Effective methods combine positive recognition and discipline.

*Continued on page 3*

### **New Ideas from AYP in Boston**

This year's National AYP Conference in Boston offered many options for Y professionals. Safe-Wise took a stroll through the exhibitor hall and was introduced to a number of vendors whose products and/or services support safety and risk management efforts at YMCAs.

This issue of *Safety Insights* will provide brief information for many ideas that may either be new or only embraced by a limited number of YMCAs. This does not mean that every idea is correct for every YMCA or that Safe-Wise recommends that your Y needs to sign-up for every new wonder. This information is only offered to expand conversation and in an effort to show Ys how a little creative thinking may assist in the ongoing effort to better manage risks at their Y.

Safe-Wise encourages every YMCA staff member to think outside of the box and be creative with managing risks. Innovation is a YMCA tradition.

Take a look at what is available and think about the implications for your Y. If you have information about other strategies or products that work for your Y, let Safe-Wise know and we will provide information in future issues. ♦

## A Lifeguard's Extra Eyes

The Poseidon system is a computer-aided, drowning-detection system. The system analyzes activity in the pool, which is captured by a network of cameras mounted both above and below the water's surface. Poseidon does not replace lifeguards; it assists them by constantly monitoring the activity in and around the pool, without distraction.

Since first being introduced several year's ago, Poseidon has been installed in a number of YMCA pools across the US. The system can be installed in both existing pools and during the construction of new facilities. It offers a critical back-up system to a YMCA's aquatic safety efforts. More on the Poseidon system is available at [www.poseidon-tech.com](http://www.poseidon-tech.com). ♦

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## Effective Communication for Emergencies

Safe-Wise recommends that effective aquatic emergency procedures include an "All Call" push button alarm on pool decks. Lack of an efficient communication system is a challenge for many YMCAs. Lifeguards need to be able to quickly activate the emergency response and then assist a victim; they cannot be tied up waiting on a phone, looking for an air horn, or even worse... left alone.

Many YMCAs have moved toward the installation of hard-wired systems and others, avoiding the expense of hard-wiring the system, have installed wireless systems. The wireless systems allow for easy placement of push buttons to activate the alarm and in some cases even allow the guard to wear an activator on their whistle lanyard.

Another creative solution comes from the Simi Valley Family YMCA. Aquatics Director Robert Martin purchased the Safety Turtle Alarm System. The system was originally created for use with home-based pools, but was creatively adapted for use in a commercial application like the YMCA. Simi Valley guards have the "Turtle" applied to their rescue tubes. When the tube is immersed in water, like in a rescue, the alarm is activated and notifies the Y's member service desk; activating their aquatic emergency plan.

Co-inventor Bob Lyons, who is president of the Ontario, Canada-based Terrapin Communications Inc., the Safety Turtle's manufacturer, was at the Boston AYP Conference and noted that other Ys have now followed Simi Valley's lead. Mr. Lyons reported that he has worked with a number YMCAs and that his company has several system options available to Ys including a multi-location option for use in more than just the Y's pool areas. Several activators can be set up on one alarm with a colored light indicating which area set off the alarm.

More information on the Safety Turtle System may be obtained by visiting the Terrapin Communications Website, [www.safetysafeturtle.com](http://www.safetysafeturtle.com). ♦

### **RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT:**

The **AquaGuard** pool alarm system utilizes sonar technology to protect outdoor pools from unauthorized use. The system provides a shield over outdoor pools that is activated when anything penetrates the water surface. This system can aid YMCAs with outdoor pools in curbing after-hour use. When fences and motion activated lighting is not enough, AquaGuard may be the answer. More about this product may be found at [www.aquaguardpoolalarm.com](http://www.aquaguardpoolalarm.com). ♦

## Wipe Down Those Machines

Athletix Products make a line of easy to use wipes for members and staff when wiping down fitness equipment. The wipes are loaded in a wall-mounted dispenser. Athletix produces cleansing, disinfectant, antibacterial and corrosion inhibitor wipes. The company recommends that YMCAs allow members access to only the mild cleansing wipe and utilize other varieties by staff.

Use of the wipes could replace the spray bottles and towels seen at many facilities. The wipes can also offer an effective way of addressing concerns about skin-to-skin transmission of bacteria.

More information about the complete line of products is available at the Athletix Website, [www.athletixproducts.com](http://www.athletixproducts.com). ◆

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## No Fuming at Your Y

During the warmer months of the year and as Ys close down summer facilities in the fall, there is an increase in the use of gasoline-powered equipment at outdoor worksites. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is encouraging employers and employees using gasoline to take extra precautions in handling it safely. Here are a few suggestions:

- ◆ Wash any skin or clothing that comes in contact with gasoline thoroughly with soap
- ◆ Avoid inhaling gasoline fumes by keeping all gas in approved sealable safety containers
- ◆ Know initial symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, such as headache, fatigue, dizziness, drowsiness, nausea, and tightness across the chest
- ◆ Do not use gasoline for any purpose other than fueling a motor

OSHA's *Gasoline Safety and Health Topics page* is a resource outlining OSHA's standards for working safely with gasoline, including healthful exposure limits for employees. This and other resources are available by visiting the OSHA Website, [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov). ◆

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## Member and Guest Screening Software Now Available

Many YMCAs across the US have implemented screening procedures for members and guests. New technology is now available to assist in the effort to ensure safe facilities.

*V•soft* is a web-based software application that was originally designed to be used by schools and educational facilities and has been developed with the purpose of aiding facilities in tracking their visitors, members and staff. *V•soft* not only provides an effective, efficient method for tracking user traffic, but also goes beyond conventional applications by utilizing available public databases to help control facility security. The software's "Quick Scanning" capabilities allow desk staff to scan in Driver's License information which is compared to available State Offenders Registries.

Several YMCAs, including those in Houston and Sarasota have implemented this program. More information is available by visiting the *V•soft* Website, [www.raptorware.com](http://www.raptorware.com). ◆

# Revised Industry Practices for Climbing Walls

The Climbing Wall Association, Inc. (CWA) announced the release of the draft third edition of the *Industry Practices: A Sourcebook for the Operation of Manufactured Climbing Walls* to its members today.

The purpose of the *Industry Practices* is to raise awareness of standard climbing practices for those operating recreational climbing wall facilities throughout North America and to provide a critical element of climbing industry self-regulation. The *Industry Practices* have been developed through a collaborative effort by members of the climbing wall industry over many years. The current edition was developed by the CWA Operations Standards Committee in cooperation with CWA members, industry representatives, other experts, and members of the public.

According to Bill Zimmermann, Executive Director of the CWA, this edition is a major revision of the document with new material. "The third edition of the *Industry Practices* is a substantial revision of the 2003 edition. The new edition addresses business practices, human resources, client orientation, equipment use, and facility operations in a more thorough and user-friendly format" he said.

The CWA is a 501(c)(06), non-profit, industry trade association for manufacturers of climbing wall equipment, builders of climbing walls, operators of climbing walls, and others involved in the climbing industry. The mission of the Climbing Wall Association is to support the development of the climbing wall industry, to promote the sport of climbing, and to advocate for the interests of our members. The *Industry Practices* is provided free of charge to CWA members. More information is available by visiting [www.climbingwallindustry.org](http://www.climbingwallindustry.org). ♦

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## Botulism Alert for Food Service Providers

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is distributing a food service alert to all consumers not to eat or serve certain canned food products produced by Castleberry's Food Company of Augusta, Georgia, due to possible botulism contamination. Botulism can be fatal.

Castleberry's is recalling all of the potentially contaminated products and is cooperating with the FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, and the states' investigations into the cause of contamination.

To learn more about this warning and to review the listing of recalled products please visit the FDA Website, [www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/castleberry.html](http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/castleberry.html). ♦

## Concussion Resource Now Available

Y-USA, with the representation of Brian Rammer, Sports and Recreation Director of the Neenah-Menasha YMCA/YMCA of Fox Cities, participated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the development of a youth sports director toolkit for preventing, recognizing and managing concussions. Built upon the foundation of a widely successful kit targeting high school sports coaches and involving top-tier youth sports organizations, the *Heads Up* kit offers fact sheets for coaches, athletes and parents (some of which are also in Spanish), and information on what to do if an athlete has sustained a concussion. To read more and order your free copy, visit [www.cdc.gov/concussioninyouthsports/](http://www.cdc.gov/concussioninyouthsports/). ♦

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### Trends from page 1

Email and instant messaging (IM) cannot be considered confidential or private; both are admissible as evidence as recent court cases have demonstrated. Neither can they be absolutely and completely deleted beyond recovery. For these reasons, Ys are learning to be careful about what information or conversations are transmitted through email or IMs. Record retention policies and procedures must include them and staff and volunteers must follow these policies.

More information about current risk management trends and practices at YMCAs will be offered in future issues of *Safety Insights*. ♦