

Safety InsightsSM

Safety & Risk Management News & Notes

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What is Risk Management?

Actually defining risk management is difficult for many Y professionals. They probably are doing many things to manage their various risks and do not realize it. Sometimes just the very mention of risk management causes people to fidget with discomfort. However, professionals must be alert to the subject, because for risk management to be truly effective it must be carried out through a thoughtful and comprehensive program.

So what is risk management? Risk management is often defined as planned efforts control hazards that effect the assets of an organization. Assets include property (buildings, land, vehicles, equipment), people (members, community, staff), data, finances (flow, investments) and image (trademarks, reputation, etc.). A newer approach that may be more appropriate for YMCAs is called Enterprise Risk Management (ERM). ERM is the process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the activities of an organization in order to minimize the effects of risk on an organization's mission. Enterprise risk management expands the process to include not just risks associated with accidental losses, but also financial, strategic, operational, and other risks. ERM provides a framework for risk management, which typically involves identifying particular events or circumstances relevant to the organization's objectives (risks and opportunities), assessing them in terms of likelihood and magnitude of impact, determining a response strategy, and monitoring progress. By identifying and proactively addressing risks and opportunities, YMCAs can protect their assets and create greater safety for their members, employees, volunteers and communities. ERM integrates concepts of strategic planning, operations management, and internal control in an organization's risk management plan.

There are several critical risk management functions no matter which approach an organization chooses to follow. These include risk assessment, risk financing and risk control. *Safety Insights* will explore these terms and their definitions in future articles. A series of articles on these topics will discuss practical applications of both components and strategies of an effective risk management program.

Whether you have a full-time risk management position or a part-time focus, how you manage your practices dictates the effectiveness of your efforts. Creating awareness and a safety culture are some of the first steps. Look for more in upcoming issues of *Safety Insights*.

Additional information on risk management is available from the Non Profit Risk Management Center, from your insurance broker, and/or from the Insurance Institute of America (AICPCU). ♦

Aquatic Safety Training

The most critical skills for a lifeguard are those that prevent accidents. While rescue and resuscitation skills are extremely important, scanning skills used in victim recognition are the primary function of the lifeguard. Lifeguards must be constantly vigilant and attentive. Lifeguards may appear to be Rescue Ready and actively scanning but tests continue to show that less than 10 percent of the lifeguards tested spotted a submerged silhouette manikin within 10 seconds of its placement on the pool bottom. The YUSA Aquatic Safety Task Force has identified victim recognition as a key focus area for Ys.

Safe-Wise Consulting provides training that focuses on the critical behaviors that encourage a high level of vigilance at Ys. This training draws from YUSA guidelines and the latest research on vigilance and cognitive vision. The workshops focus on strategies to improve victim recognition, vigilance capacity, management functions, lifeguard supervision, lifeguard training, drills and scanning strategies. Workshops have recently been presented at the NJ YMCA Risk Managers meeting and the Delaware Program School. For more information on this training and other program contact Safe-Wise Consulting. ♦

School Bus Safety Program

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is committed to reducing school bus-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities through both behavioral programs and vehicle regulations. NHTSA works to educate drivers and riders about safe behaviors that reduce the risk of being involved in a school bus-related crash.

The NHTSA has a variety of resources available for YMCAs. These include a School Bus Driver In-service Safety Training Series that covers bus operations, safety procedures and accident prevention topics.

More information about their programs, School Bus Safety week and the in-service training series is available at their Website www.nhtsa.gov. ♦

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Child Abuse Prevention Training Programs

Child Abuse Prevention Training is critical in managing the ever-present risk of abuse at YMCAs. Staff training is only a single component of an effective abuse prevention program, but a key element nevertheless.

The YMCA of the USA Child Abuse Prevention Program was distributed to every YMCA in the US several years ago. This important resource should not be collecting dust in a program director's office. The two CDs and video are useful today in providing guidance for your Y's abuse prevention efforts. The program resources include training outlines for front-line staff, policy volunteers, program areas and parents. CD#1 is a self-study program for supervisors that will help them ensure sound prevention practices during hiring, interview and screening of prospective staff.

While YMCAs have seen a decrease in adult-to-child offenses, child-on-child and other incidents have seen a higher rate of total incidences involving abuse. These recent trends suggest that YMCAs should update their training to include discussion and policies on Internet communication, personal Website use and bullying.

Child Abuse prevention Training can be delivered through a variety of methods including internal trainers, local agencies, insurance companies and other outside vendors. No matter the source, the training should be part of every employee's and volunteer's orientation. Initial training should be conducted within the first two months of hire. A refresher training with critical updates should be conducted on an annual basis thereafter. Regular reminders can be included during departmental staff meetings.

A Train-the-Trainer workshop for the YMCA Child Abuse Prevention Program will be offered at the Boston YMCA Program School in October. More information about this training workshop and registration information is available at the Y Exchange Website. ♦

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT:

Bully Proof Your Child for Life is a recently published book from the nationally-renowned "Bully Coach", Dr. Joel Haber. It is the first book of its kind to help parents and educators deal with the ever growing problem of bullying among kids. It is a great resource for parents and a must read for staff. It is available at national book sellers and by visiting www.bullyproofchild.com ♦

Youth Sports Safety

Organized sports and recreation can improve physical fitness, coordination, self-discipline and teamwork, but these beneficial activities put participants at risk for injury unless precautions are in place. Staff and leaders need to take precautions to protect young athletes and the organization from harm. It is every Y's responsibility to see that youth in its program are safe from foreseeable harm. The following are some tips offered from *The Season of Hope: A Risk Management Guide for Youth-Serving Nonprofits*, available from the Non Profit Risk Management Center.

- ◆ Dress participants in appropriate protective equipment
- ◆ Maintain safe playing conditions
- ◆ Have an emergency plan for injuries during practice or games
- ◆ Enforce safety rules
- ◆ Provide trained adult supervision of play
- ◆ Provide proper training and skills building for the young athletes
- ◆ Match and group children according to skill level, weight and physical and mental maturity

More information about this topic and other resources are available at the Non Profit Risk Management Center's Website www.nonprofitrisk.org. ◆

Put the Right Footwear Forward

Flip flops are an extremely popular style of footwear for many YMCA staff. However, not only can they be considered an unprofessional form of workplace footwear; they also carry a more serious risk. This style of shoe is associated with a number of problems, injuries and accidents.

Physicians at the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons say flip-flops are linked to a growing number of heel problems among teens and young adults. Unlike sturdy shoes, flip-flops aren't good for extensive walking because they offer no arch support, heel cushioning, or shock absorption. Because they offer little protection, wearers are at greater risk for stubbed toes, glass cuts, puncture wounds, or having a heavy object dropped on the foot. Flip-flops can also impair a driver's control if they come off the foot and lodge under the brake or gas pedal, according to the American Automobile Association.

YMCAs should consider when and where this and other styles of footwear are appropriate. Appropriate footwear can help staff to be more comfortable, perform their responsibilities more effectively and, of course, protect them from injury. Sturdy shoes should be required for most positions, while safety shoes or boots are appropriate for some specialized job functions.

By monitoring the attire and footwear of employees and volunteers, YMCAs can help control accidents, slips, falls and other injuries. ◆

Review and Prevent Internal Crime

With the current financial climate in the US YMCAs should take time to review their internal and external crime controls. The mortgage industry currently faces internal dishonesty and external fraud problems. There is also a slow-down of the housing market, numerous credit issues because of large amounts of credit card debt, and a noticeable slowing of on-time payments by individuals and many companies. A review of procedures for identifying and preventing employee dishonesty and other crime is a prudent move.

Financial pressures can increase the risk of an employee becoming involved with financial misbehaviors. A typical scam is when an employee connects with an external accomplice to set up a company that will provide invoices for vendor services with no services actually being delivered to the Y. Multiple payments to a vendor on a repeated basis are a "red flag" for potential fraud. A background check of vendors receiving multiple payments to verify the legitimacy of the company should be considered part of your dishonesty prevention procedures.

YMCAs can turn to their financial auditor, accountant or YUSA for additional guidance in establishing financial controls. Regular review of procedures will ensure that practice follows policy. It is also a good time to review your crime-related coverages with your insurance agent/broker to make sure you are properly covered for these risks. ◆

Safety Insights Going Online

Safety Insights newsletter will soon be offered to all YMCAs, free of charge, through an agreement with YUSA Consulting. Safe-Wise Consulting has worked with Steve Hambright, Director of YUSA Consulting to ensure that this valuable resource is available to all YMCAs.

Past issues of the newsletter are now available for download at the Safe-Wise Website. New monthly editions will be available at Y Exchange beginning in October.

YMCA leaders can contact Safe-Wise to be included on a monthly distribution list for the monthly newsletter announcements. Contact information is listed below. Watch for more information from YMCA of the USA in the coming weeks. ♦

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Use the Correct Gasket on Oxygen Tanks

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) have recently issued recommendations on the use of gaskets/washers on compressed oxygen tanks. YMCAs should ensure that they are following these recommendations when using or storing emergency supplemental oxygen.

Two types of washers, referred to as CGA 870 seals, are commonly used to create the seal at the cylinder valve/regulator interface. The type recommended by many regulator manufacturers is a metal-bound elastomeric sealing washer that is designed for multiple use applications. The other common type, often supplied free-of-charge with refilled oxygen cylinders, is a plastic crush gasket suitable for single use applications. When used more than once, the crush gaskets require higher torque than the elastomeric sealing washers in order to seal the cylinder valve/regulator interface, and if they are used again, they require more torque with each successive use. The cylinder valve/regulator connection is designed to be hand-tightened. If the crush gaskets are re-used, the need for increased torque may require using a wrench or other hand tool, which can deform the crush gasket and damage the cylinder valve and regulator. This can result in leakage of oxygen past the cylinder valve seat and across the nylon crush gasket.

FDA has received 12 reports in which regulators used with oxygen cylinders have burned or exploded, in some cases injuring personnel. Some of the incidents occurred during emergency medical use or during routine equipment checks. FDA and NIOSH believe that improper use of gaskets/washers in these regulators was a major factor in both the ignition and severity of the fires, although there are likely other contributing factors.

FDA and NIOSH recommend that plastic crush gaskets never be reused. Several general safety precautions should be taken to avoid accidents and incidents relating to oxygen regulators. Always “crack” cylinder valves (open the valve just enough to allow gas to escape for a very short time) before attaching regulators in order to expel foreign matter from the outlet port of the valve. Ys should always follow the regulator manufacturer’s instructions for attaching the regulator to an oxygen cylinder and use the sealing gasket specified by the regulator manufacturer. The regulator and CGA 870 seal should be inspected before attaching it to the valve to ensure that the regulator is equipped with only one clean, sealing-type washer that is in good condition. The valve, regulator and gasket should always be free from oil or grease. T-handles should only be tightened firmly by hand and not with wrenches or other hand tools that may over-torque the handle.

More information is available from manufacturers, suppliers and the FDA or NIOSH. Proper care and maintenance will allow YMCAs to continue to use emergency oxygen as a highly beneficial part of their emergency response procedures. ♦