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**Preparations for wildfire season can start now.** Every year there are more organizations at risk as wildfires burn across an increasing number of areas in the US. The National Fire Protection Association ([NFPA](#)) has materials that can help organizations and individual prepare for wildfire season. Additional information about emergency preparedness and wildfire safety is also available from the Fire Adapted Communities [Website](#) and through the [Ready, Set, Go! Program](#). Safe-Wise Consulting has prepared [Considerations for Wildfire Emergencies](#) that is available in the [Online Resource Library](#).

**Water slides, play structures and spray features** are the trend at aquatic venues and in the aquatic industry in general. These features may present new challenges to experienced aquatic facility operators. Design, safety and operational guidelines come from the amusement industry and organizations like ASTM International (formerly the American Society for Testing Materials). Manufacturers and also some states have produced operational safety guidelines and/or requirements. Some credentialing bodies that specialize in water park safety exist but the larger lifeguarding industry is only really beginning to address the need for specialized lifeguard training. Add into the mix older slides with fewer safety features and inflatables and your facility can present many safety challenges. Read more about [safe slide operation](#) and [use of inflatables](#) in the [Online Resource Library](#).

**Ropes course inspections are part of summer program preparation.** Gary Forster of [Camp Solutions](#) writes about the importance of course inspection: "The Association for Challenge Course Technology ([ACCT](#)) has set the industry standards for 20 years, and is recognized as *the* authority. All courses are supposed to be designed to their specifications, and inspected annually to show they still meet them. This is especially important for "High Ropes" elements. But for those that only have "low ropes" elements and haven't seen the need, PLEASE at least use the self-inspection standards for playgrounds, and keep records. They cover things up to 10' off the ground." Forster sites the [Public Playground Safety Handbook](#) from the US Consumer Product Safety Commission ([CPSC](#)) as his favorite resource for conducting in-house low element inspections.

**Tick season is coming.** Normal tick season lasts from mid-April through August in parts of the US. Ticks may be active all year in some regions with warmer weather. Tick-borne pathogens can be passed to humans by the bite of infected ticks. Some of the most common tick-borne diseases in the US include: Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness and Tick-Borne Relapsing Fever. Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vectorborne illness in the US according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)). Ticks usually must be attached for 36-48 hours or more before an illness such as Lyme disease can be transmitted. Outdoor workers are at risk of exposure to tick-borne diseases if they work at sites with woods, bushes, high grass, or leaf litter. Outdoor workers in most regions of the US should be extra careful to protect themselves in the spring, summer, and fall when ticks are most active. The good news is that you can take steps to reduce your risk of being bitten by an infected tick. Read more [HERE](#) for prevention information. Other resources include this [curriculum for educating youth](#) and handouts such as [these](#).

### **Did you see this in the last E-news:**

**Properly executing a waiver agreement is important.** A liability waiver, release or exculpatory agreement is a contract relieving or limiting a party's blame for harm another person may incur, such as bodily injury, as a result of participating in an activity. Your organization can use this type of contract as part of your risk management program. Many nonprofits use a membership waiver for general facility use and may also use additional waivers for certain high-risk or specialty programs such as ropes courses and equestrian programs. Your waiver must be properly constructed, consistent with the legal requirements and precedents in your state, reviewed by legal counsel and properly executed. To be properly executed you must ensure that users are given time to read the form, that the form is legible and clear and that you witness the user's signature. One common error in executing a waiver contract is when utilizing the form for a family or couple. While a parent can sign on behalf of a minor child (check your state's laws on this), one adult cannot sign for another. This often leads to organizations failing to secure both signatures on their waiver form. An example would be that a parent signs-up for a family membership and provides a waiver signature at the time of registration. However, when the other parent or adults in the family are not present organizations must develop a procedure to secure the additional signatures. Waivers can protect your organization and are often required by insurers. It is a good idea to have your waivers reviewed by local legal counsel to ensure they are current. Sample waivers, agreements and contracts are available on in the [Online Resource Library](#).

**April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month.** Distracted driving is rampant on our roadways, killing hundreds each year. Unfortunately, it is easier than ever to drive distracted. Auto makers are putting technology into our vehicles that allows us to make phone calls, dictate texts or emails and update social media while we are behind the wheel – all actions that are proven to increase crash risk. The National Safety Council ([NSC](#)) observes April as Distracted Driving Awareness Month to draw attention to this epidemic. NSC wants to empower you to put safety first and Take Back Your Drive. Read more [HERE](#). Learn why your organization needs a [Cell Phone Policy](#).

**This Month's Topics:**

*[Wildfire Preparations](#)*

*[Water Slide Safety](#)*

*[Ropes Course Inspections](#)*

*[Tick Season Info](#)*

*[Use of Waivers](#)*

*[Distracted Driving Awareness](#)*