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**Knowing an applicant's past can help protect your future.** Some organizations have learned the hard way that staff applicants are not always truthful or forthcoming during the application process. Inaccuracies can lead to the possibility of inappropriate staff being selected for your organization. Thorough screening practices including reference and background checks of candidates may be time-consuming; however there is value in knowing who you are hiring. Safe-Wise has published [\*Considerations for Screening Employed and Volunteer Staff\*](#) in the [Online Resource Library](#).

**Evaluating swim ability of participants is critical in preventing aquatic incidents.** Incident statistics show that almost 80% of YMCA aquatic incidents involve participants under the age of 18 and 58% involve children under age ten. Aquatic facilities use a variety of methods to assist in aquatic supervision, from increased number of guards, to computerized monitoring systems to various buddy systems. These methods prove to be effective swimmer management strategies and many incidents are prevented or at least their magnitude is reduced. Organized programs such as camps and childcare often fare better when it comes to supervision; regulations require specific practices and supervision levels that help reduce incidents. Children in camp and child care programs are also usually swim tested and their pool access is appropriate to their swimming ability. Swim ability testing can strengthen the aquatic safety practices of any aquatic facility or program. Safe-Wise has published [\*Considerations for Developing Swim Testing Procedures\*](#) in the [Online Resource Library](#). This document can assist your organization in developing this effective swimmer management strategy.

**Sun and heat can be stressful on staff and participants when outdoors.** Overexposure to the sun can damage the skin and heat related illness such as stroke, exhaustion and cramps are possible when working or playing outdoors. Some tips to combat the downside of the sun are to keep hydrated with water, wear sunglasses and sunscreen, rest in the shade regularly and wear appropriate clothing. More information on protecting yourself outdoors is available in the [Online Resource Library](#) with resources such as the [Heat Stress Fact Sheet](#) and [Sun Protection Facts](#).

**It is important to screen staff through an offender registry.** Ninety percent (90%) of sexual abuse victims know their abusers. In most abuse cases a rapport and trust has been built over a period of time. Every effort must be made to verify the appropriateness of employed and volunteer staff that interact with youth; offender registries are a part of a good screening process. Visit the [National Sex Offender Public Website](#) for more information.

**Nurturing the right culture at camp starts with training.** As camp professionals prepare for summer there are youth protection issues facing their camps. Hazing, Bullying, other peer abuse and even choking games may not be prevalent, but they do occur, and camps must be on guard to prevent these abuses at camp. Some topics to be considered when developing training content include managing free time, controlling the use of cameras (digital photos) and looking out for new trends. Directors should look to include staff training on child abuse prevention and behavior management, staff and camper behavior expectations (communicated to parents, campers and staff), policies on staff and camper interaction via email and instant messaging and supervision plans for time between activities, cabin time and evenings. Safe-Wise Consulting [is available](#) to assist with onsite training and the development of your summer staff training programs.

**Maintaining the grass can expose staff and others to risks.** Many camps and other organizations rely on riding mowers, lawn tractors, and garden tractors for maintaining the landscape on their properties. Many organizations utilize their own staff for this work as oppose to contracting with a professional service. It is important to train staff to recognize the possible hazards associated with this type of equipment. Hazards most often associated with riding equipment are blade contact and loss of stability. The Consumer Product Safety Commission ([CPSC](#)) estimates that there are nearly 40,000 injuries related to riding mower incidents treated annually in hospital emergency rooms. Proper training, control of equipment use and appropriate attire are essential parts of using this equipment safely. Read more in the CPSC's [Riding Lawnmower Safety](#).

### **This Month's Topics:**

*Screening Staff*  
*Swim Ability Testing*  
*Sun and Heat Protection*  
*Sexual Offender Registry Search*  
*Camp Culture*  
*Lawnmower Safety*