

May 2012 | Volume 6 Issue 5.1

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. 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](#).

Many myths about lightning abound; "Lightning never strikes the same place twice", "I'm safe from lightning if it is not cloudy or raining", "Rubber car tires protect you from lightning" or "I'm safe from lightning if I'm inside". The fact is all of these statements are false. Summertime is lightning season and organizations must make account for this in their emergency and operational planning. Staff should be trained to be proactive when weather changes and know how to protect people from danger. Preparing to close pools (indoor and outdoor) and waterfronts is especially important. More information on preparing for lightning season is available in the [Online Resource Library](#) with [Lightning Safety Guidelines for Pools](#) and [Lightning Safety Tips](#).

Wildfire preparation and prevention is an important part of your emergency planning for summer. While sometimes caused by lightning, 90% of wildfires are caused by humans. Many wildfires can be prevented and the impact on your property can be reduced through sound preparations. Emergency plans should be designed for evacuations if your organization offers programming in a possible wildfire area. There currently is no way to forecast wildfire outbreaks, so it is critically important to plan ahead and remove potential hazards. Because wildfire can change direction and speed suddenly, a minor threat can quickly escalate into a major threat. More information on prevention and preparation can be found at the National Fire Protection Association's [Firewise Communities](#) program, the Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)) and the American Red Cross ([ARC](#)).

It's Better to Miss One Game than the Whole Season according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)). The CDC has developed the [Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports](#) initiative to offer information about concussions and to help ensure the health and safety of young athletes. The *Heads Up* initiative provides important information on preventing, recognizing, and responding to a concussion for coaches, parents and athletes. A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. The potential for concussions is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. Concussions can occur, however in any organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity. As many as 3.8 million sports and recreation related concussions occur in the United States each year.

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.

EPA Providing Sun Protection - the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has free resources about keeping kids healthy in the sun during summer programs. One example is a craft activity where youth make bracelets with beads that change colors when they've been in the sun too long. Read more [HERE](#).

This Month's Topics:

Screening Staff
Lightning Safety
Wildfire Preparations
Concussion Prevention
Swim Testing
Sun Protection