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Building a Culture of Safety. Your staff is an extremely important asset that must be protected from injury in order to maintain your effective operations, control your insurance costs, ensure positive morale and because no one wants their staff, youth or clients to get hurt. A safe staff provides safe programs and helps create a culture of safety throughout the organization. A safety culture helps the organization provide its mission effectively and efficiently. Click [Here](#) to view our 2018 Mid-Winter Staff Safety Reminder.

“Very Active” Flu Season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s ([CDC](#)) Director Brenda Fitzgerald has described the 2017-2018 flu season as “very active,” and has said that much of the country is experiencing “[widespread and intense flu activity](#).” Thirty children have died from confirmed influenza-related causes so far, this flu season. The total includes deaths between Oct. 16 and Jan. 13. Childcare centers should prominently post policies on immunizations, hand washing; cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting surfaces and toys; and excluding (sending home) children and staff who are sick. Display [educational materials](#) to encourage vaccination, good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette throughout your facility. Help staff and families understand the important roles they can play in reducing the spread of flu. Click [HERE](#) for additional information on Protecting Yourself Against Flu.

2017 OSHA Form 300A. Employers can now begin to [electronically report](#) their Calendar Year (CY) 2017 [Form 300A](#) data to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration ([OSHA](#)). All covered organizations must submit the information by July 1, 2018. Beginning in 2019 and every year thereafter, covered organizations must submit the information by March 2. Employers can view their submitted CY 2016 Form 300A summary information, but they cannot edit or submit additional 2016 data on this website. Remember, not all organizations are covered by this requirement. To review which organizations, need to provide their 2017 data, [click here](#). Organizations in State-Plan States that were not required to submit their information to OSHA last year should check with their state to see if electronic reporting requirements will be adopted in 2018.

Save the Date: WAHC 2018. The [fifteenth annual World Aquatic Health™ Conference \(WAHC\)](#) will be held October 10-12, 2018, at the [Charleston Marriott](#) in Charleston, SC. The WAHC is an extraordinary educational conference for aquatic industry professionals to discuss, learn, and network with like-minded people. This scientific conference is filled with seminars covering a variety of topics, such as Health Benefits and Aquatic Therapy Techniques, Drowning Prevention, Facility Management, Public Health, New Technology, Advanced Chemistry, Advanced Service Concepts, and the [MAHC](#). Early-bird registration opens on Monday, April 2, 2018.

Elevation Training Masks. Elevation training masks have grown in usage as they have been popularized by professional athletes or by popular movies. The masks have been marketed to suggest that they can simulate exercise in high altitude elevations or provide the benefits of hypoxic training. There is limited research on the effectiveness of these devices. These devices can restrict oxygen to the user, can increase rebreathing expired CO2 trapped in the users' mask and even limit hydration during workouts. These are very real concerns for users and facility operators to consider. From a risk vs reward review there seems to be little evidence that the benefits outweigh the concerns and support the use of these devices among the mainstream population. Organizations are encouraged to review the use of these devices and take appropriate action to restrict or ban their use until strong evidence is available to support their use in the public/private fitness environment.

Did you see this in the last E-news?

Membership / Guest Screening. With new year's resolutions and cold winter weather setting in, you can expect new faces at your door this time of year. Now is a good time to review and update your membership and visitor screening practices. Screening is an important layer of youth protection to help decrease the risk of abuse. Does your organization check **all** members, guests, staff and contractors into the facility? Do you always know who is in your building? Do visitors sign-in and wear a name tag identifying them? Does your organization conduct a national sex offender registry check on everyone who enters your facilities? No one should have unauthorized access to youth or be in the building or program areas without acceptable identification and permission. Best practice is to conduct a [national sex offender registry check](#) on all members and guests prior to gaining entry to your facility and have established procedures for responding when you find anyone on the list. The practice of membership and visitor screening is also a deterrent to potential predators who are looking for easy access to children. Sex offender registry checks should be repeated on the same schedule as staff criminal background checks. Click [HERE](#) for additional child abuse prevention resources located on the [Safe-Wise Resource Library](#).

Snow Removal and Cleanup Hazards. With record snowfalls and frigid temperatures across the country, the U.S. Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration ([OSHA](#)) is urging all those involved in snow removal and cleanup to take precautions and focus on safety. Workers performing snow removal operations may be exposed to serious hazards, including [slips and falls](#) while walking on snow and ice, [falls from roofs](#) and roof edges, through skylights, or from aerial ladders and lifts. Workers may also be injured by a roof collapse. Other storm recovery work hazards include being struck by vehicles, carbon monoxide, [hypothermia](#), and being injured by powered equipment. Click [HERE](#) for a full list of winter storm hazards and safeguards.