



Fall Program Safety Reminder

As the busy summer season winds down for YMCAs it is important to ensure that several key risk management functions are included in the transition and preparation for fall programming.

Aquatics:

Pools and aquatic programming are primary exposures for YMCAs as they provide their mission-driven services through this popular program area. It is critical for the organization to take every step possible to ensure a high level of aquatic vigilance, safety and emergency preparedness. Some key areas to include in fall planning are:

- Lifeguards tested at time of hire for abilities and awareness of procedures
- Implementing a monthly in-service training program for aquatic staff
- Rehearsing emergency procedures with key staff and local EMS
- Implementing a swim testing for all youth participants
- Strengthening instructional programs to reduce the number of non-swimmers
- Ensuring that pool are in compliance with the [Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act](#) by year's end
- Ensuring that Lifeguards are Rescue Ready and vigilant at all times through, training, supervision and organizational support
- Properly equipping and maintaining aquatic facilities

Child Abuse Prevention:

Youth protection is a primary risk management concern for all youth serving agencies; YMCAs must constantly include protection strategies in their training, operations and programming. These are some key action items for fall programming:

- All employees and any volunteers that work with children should be trained in current youth protection strategies and trends. This includes refresher training for returning staff.
- YMCAs should follow the "Rule of Three" for all programs
- Staff contact with program participants outside the YMCA should be restricted
- Bullying prevention practices should be included in training and activities
- Staff, children and parents should understand the YMCA's policies and practices

Facilities:

Regular maintenance of facilities can often prevent accidents and damages. Regular documented inspections should be conducted and corrective action should be taken for repairs and preventive maintenance. These are some key issues to remember for the fall:

- All off-site facilities should have a documented inspection
- Use of non-owned facilities should be confirmed in a use agreement or contract
- Playgrounds should be inspected in accordance with the [Guidelines for Public Playground Safety](#)
- Plans should be made for storms and Hurricane season
- October is [National Fire Prevention Month](#) and is a great time to reinforce fire prevention strategies with staff and in program activities. Common areas for fire prevention focus include dryer ducts and lint traps, saunas and contractor's activities

Programs:

Programs can be on-site, off-site, youth and/or adult focused. With this many possibilities, it is important for organizations to ensure that programs are well planned and strong practices are in place to ensure the safety of staff and participants. Here are some tips to include for the fall:

- Staff should inspect all programs at the beginning of each session; especially off-site and outdoor facilities
- All programs should be conducted with recognized standards and have established goals
- [Soccer goals should be securely anchored](#) to fields or stored in a manner to prevent tipping and accidently injury
- Program staff should be trained in their program areas and understand accident prevention strategies and emergency response plans
- When transportation is provided, all vehicles should be well maintained, inspected and staff should be trained in defensive driving strategies