



## **Safety Reminder – The New Year**

There can be many things that are different besides the dates as we welcome a new year. January usually brings new members (or returning) that are anxious to get work on their resolutions or simply shed the Holiday bulge. It can also be a time to change staff or in the case of this year, reduce staffing. All these things can contribute to a climate that needs a little impulse of safety. This issue of *Safety Reminders* will touch on ways to share some risks and prepare for critical times at your YMCA.

### **Emergency Plan – Ready for what the New Year shall bring:**

Times of minor or major crisis can take their toll on the unprepared. The emotional and physical impact of incidents can be greatly reduced by planning for emergencies. Emergency plans should be reviewed each year and practiced through a program of regular drills (see below). Every staff member should be oriented to their responsibilities for action during different emergency scenarios. A written plan should be available to all staff and posted in critical areas of the facility. Plans should be site-specific and consistent with all locations; including off-site child care and program facilities.

### **Emergency Drills – Practice makes perfect:**

Ever take a CPR refresher course? It is quite likely that unless you are an EMT, you needed a little work to reacquaint yourself to the techniques needed to pass the course. The familiar adage "Practice makes perfect" holds true for emergency planning. Thankfully emergencies may not be frequent occurrences, but because of this, there is a need to review the plan regularly. An effective drill program can assist in this preparation. Drills can be conducted at a departmental level on a monthly basis. This may be as simple as a role-play during a staff meeting or as thorough as a lock-down drill at a childcare site. Fully interactive, scenario-based interdepartmental drills should be conducted on a quarterly basis. These types of drills allow the Y to both prepare staff for emergencies and review their plans to see how different departments interact during times of crisis. Drills are primarily for staff learning, but participants and members can certainly be involved. Some Ys post informational signs to alert members that a drill may be conducted at a time while they are in the facility. This communication can prevent scaring or angering people that are in the facility. Many Ys find it helpful to include local EMS in at least one drill annually. This practice builds rapport with local responders and can assist the Y in emergency preparation. At the very least, local EMS should review your YMCA's emergency plan annually.

## **Risk Transfer – Sharing Risk for the New Year:**

Risk transfer is a common risk management technique to help spread responsibility for risks among those involved with activities and programs. Start the year out by making sure all collaborative agreements are up-to-date, contracts are in effect and insurance certificates (naming the Y as an additional insured) are on file. All adult members and guests should sign a waiver as part of their registration. Providing general information that shows users the possible impact of their participation, like a parent handbook, program outline or PAR-Q form, is very helpful.

## **Training:**

Let's make 2009 a year of safety. Ys can help accomplish this goal by making plans to regularly train staff on safety topics. All new employees and program volunteers should receive an initial general safety orientation when they begin their service. More position-specific training can be conducted as staff enters into service and regular updates can be provided at both the departmental and organizational level. Key topics such as prevention of slips and falls, back injury prevention, child abuse prevention and fire prevention should be regularly communicated to staff. Tying these topics into other events helps to emphasize their importance and can assist staff in retaining information. An example of this idea might include conducting youth protection training during the month of April (National Child Abuse Prevention Month) and focusing training of fire prevention during the month of October (National Fire Prevention Month). These months are also good times to expand awareness activities beyond staff by including community abuse prevention activities in April's Healthy Kids Day and inviting local fire officials to provide safety programs during October youth activities.

## **Look for More:**

Safe-Wise Consulting has additional safety training materials and general information available in its online resource library; including the following:

### Emergency Planning:

[Guidelines for Developing an Emergency Procedures Plan](#)  
[Guidelines for Conducting Emergency Drills](#)  
[Procedures for Facility Lockdown](#)

### Risk Transfer:

[Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire – PAR-Q](#)  
[Sample Waiver Packet](#)

### Training Topics:

[Lifting Safety Training](#)  
[Safety Orientation Checklist](#)  
[Fire Prevention Awareness](#)

The online resource library is updated on a monthly basis.