



## Hot Topics for YMCAs

**Automatic External Defibrillators:** Many YMCAs have acquired AEDs for their facilities, but some still have not. They have become mandatory in some states for operations such as YMCAs. AEDS are generally recognized as a standard of care for many public physical activity facilities. AED owners should ensure readiness by conducting and documenting monthly battery checks and having staff retrained/certified annually. Revised American Heart Association guidelines may require that some AEDs be reprogrammed by their manufacturer.

**Business Continuity Plans:** YMCAs should develop a disaster plan that includes how they will continue the operations if a catastrophic situation should arise. There should be plans for emergency communications, back up computers, facilities to run programs, insurance for business interruption, and other considerations. The Nonprofit Risk Management Center has developed a free tool for nonprofits to use to assist them in creating a plan and additional information is available at Y Exchange.

**Cell Phones:** Cell phone use can be an issue for Ys in several areas. Cell phone use should be limited to lobby or public areas of facilities to eliminate the chance for distraction and inappropriate picture taking. Staff should be instructed to not use cell phones while actively driving. Cell phone use should not be allowed by on-duty Lifeguards.

**Emergency Procedures:** Each facility (owned, leased, or rented) should have a location specific written emergency procedures plan. This plan should be communicated to the staff through distribution of the written material, training, and drills. Prior to implementation, local EMS should review the plans to ensure that they comply with their standards and recommendations. Situational emergency drills should be conducted and documented on at least a quarterly basis. Drills should be varied and not only include child care evacuation drills, but circumstances such as full facility evacuations, missing person, unconscious person found in locker room, an aquatic incident and heart attack in the aerobics room.

**Eye Wash Stations:** Eyewash stations should be installed in appropriate areas of YMCAs to provide emergency first aid when someone is exposed to hazardous substances. OSHA regulations require employers to provide emergency first aid when a potentially hazardous chemical is present in the workplace. The chemical's Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) will state the requirements for emergency flushing of the eyes or body. Because chemical burns, especially to the eyes, require urgent, effective first aid, emergency eyewash stations must be located near the hazard, have unobstructed access and be properly maintained so the station is ready for use in an emergency. In most cases a single or double saline bottle does not meet the standards established by ANSI for emergency first aid eye wash.

**Fire Extinguishers:** YMCAs often have fire extinguishers located throughout their facilities because of local codes. If staff is expected to use these devices, proper training should be provided as part of an orientation and reviewed at least annually.

**Internet Use:** Many Ys allow Internet use in programs and/or facilities. Appropriate behavior and supervision for youth/teen use must be required at all times. Codes of conduct and blocking software in conjunction with supervision are often effective techniques in ensuring proper use. Staff use of personal Website such as My Space and Face Book can provide a vehicle for inappropriate content, communication and image. Many Ys have implemented behavior expectations for staff use of the Internet.



**Material Safety Data Sheets:** Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) should be available for all chemicals used at the YMCA. Copies should be stored in accessible areas near where the chemicals are stored and at a central location (front desk). All staff should know where they are, how to read them, and have access to them at all times.

**Oxygen:** The YMCA of the USA Medical Advisory Committee, YMCA Services Corporation, the American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI) and the American Heart Association all recommend the use of Emergency Oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) during cardiac emergencies. The use of Emergency O<sub>2</sub> can also be useful to aid conscious victims in respiratory distress. The YMCA of the USA has required all certified lifeguards to have oxygen administration training since January of 2003. Like AEDs, the use of Emergency O<sub>2</sub> has become the standard of care.

**Saunas:** Sauna units should be inspected frequently to ensure that there is no fire hazard present. Dry or charred wood should be removed ASAP. The unit should not be on all of the time; to prevent it from overheating. The heating units should have a protective cover surrounding them to prevent accidental touching by members or flammable articles (newspapers, towels, etc.) from being placed on the unit. There should not be oils or water present or available to come in contact with the heating unit.

**Slips & Falls:** Slips and falls are one of the most common accidents at Ys and contribute to the cost of both liability and workers' compensation claims. Keeping floors and walkways clear and dry, to prevent slips and falls can help keep staff and members safe and also prevent lawsuits against your YMCA.

**Sprinkler Head Guards:** All sprinkler heads installed over hardwood flooring should be fit with a metal guard to prevent them from being accidentally activated. Open or broken heads can release hundreds of gallons of water within minutes causing severe damage to wooden floors. Plans for water removal should be in place if a sprinkler head opens or is damaged.

**Subcontractors:** All subcontractors and vendors should provide the YMCA with a Certificate of Liability Insurance naming the YMCA as an additional insured. Insurance should have a minimum of \$1M in liability coverage. Contractors, vendors and other visitors should be supervised while on Y premises or at least be required to check in and out.

**Waivers:** The use of waivers is an effective risk transfer technique and an integral part of any YMCA's overall risk management program. By using waivers and implementing minimum insurance coverage requirements, YMCA can effectively pass on some risks involved with programs and facilities; along with informing users of these risks. YMCAs should utilize waivers as part of their general membership application, guest procedures, in high-risk programs, staff policies and for small rental groups where liability insurance coverage is not realistic.

*Other topical safety resources are available from Safe-Wise Consulting.*