



# Church safety solutions

May 2007

## Special points of interest

Church camp safety  
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**Next month!**  
Learn the key elements of developing an emergency response plan for your church

## Providing for a safe camping experience

A church camp experience can provide children and families a tremendous way to learn and grow. There are many facets of managing a church camp to consider. In this publication, we will discuss ways churches can help ensure a safe camping experience. Listed below are a few suggested minimal safety program components that church camp directors should consider to help minimize risks.

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## Bullying is a destructive force

Bullying is not playful. Victims of bullying can experience a loss of self-esteem and happiness in life. Additionally, lawsuits can arise. Church camp directors should establish a clear written policy and training to ensure bullying or harassment can be quickly identified and corrected. Policies are only as good as they are practiced. Bullying in camps can affect all the children, not just the targeted sufferers.

Camps should ensure bullying is clearly against the rules and the camp has a zero tolerance for individuals that engage in these activities.

When children withdraw or are saddened, it may not be just a case of home sickness. Counselors can help by being observant of behaviors that may indicate there is a conflict. Counselors must set an example for children by not engaging in casual teasing or allowing bullying behaviors among campers. Additionally, counselors must exhibit self-control during stressful moments. Becoming angry or verbally loud can be a very scary event for children.

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## Providing for a safe camping experience *(continued)*

1. Develop a written program identifying the operating policies for running the camp and behavioral requirements for camp employees/counselors. Suggested topics include managing certificates of insurance, dealing with possible trespassers, camper interactions, bullying prevention and camper parental release programs.
2. Know who you are hiring. Depending upon the position and state requirements, many camps will conduct a series of screenings for workers that include verification of previous employment, reference checks, verification of degree-license-certifications, criminal background checks, driving record checks and drug/alcohol tests.
3. Conduct training for all workers in the camp to ensure all policies are well known and understood. Suggested training topics include health and wellness, food handling, missing person procedures, emergency management and safety requirements for the types of activities offered at the camp such as aquatic safety, boating safety, horseback riding, playground safety, hiking and wilderness camping, transportation safety, accident investigations and campfire safety to name a few.
4. Define and communicate supervisory roles to ensure key individuals placed in areas of responsibility understand the camp's procedures for camper supervision in public areas.
5. Conduct self-inspections to ensure the camp is maintained in a manner that promotes safety and that all identified conditions are corrected and documented to prevent injury.



One additional way church camp directors can help ensure a positive camp experience is to seek out accreditation through the American Camping Association (ACA). To obtain accreditation, camps must demonstrate compliance with a series of voluntary ACA-sponsored guidelines consistent with specific programs designed to deliver a quality camp program. ACA monitors use of these voluntary programs through an independent safety audit that goes beyond regulations in most states.

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## Bullying is a destructive force *(continued)*

Counselors must become someone children can feel comfortable to come to with their fears. Even if the expressed concerns of the child seem insignificant, they may feel they are very real. Children may just need someone to listen so they won't feel threatened. Church camps that train counselors to recognize and appropriately react to signs of bullying will provide for a better camping experience for all.

# Food handler hygiene

In camp settings, food handlers may be paid or volunteer workers. Regardless, food handler hygiene is often the most overlooked element of a food-borne illness prevention program. Yet in many instances, it is the most important. A few basic rules for food handler hygiene must become habit to ensure the quality and safety of the product. Church camp directors should ensure foodservice workers who have cuts, a cough or any communicable illness refrain from contact with food. Workers should always wear clean clothing upon arriving at work. Foodservice workers should keep their hair clean and contained by a hat and/or hair net to keep hair from falling into the food while being prepared and served. All jewelry should be removed before washing hands.

Hands should be washed after employees use the rest room, eat, smoke, handle garbage, cough or sneeze. Food handlers should also wash up after touching their hair, skin or after handling cash.

As basic as it may seem, camps should ensure both food workers and campers wash their hands properly. Effective hand washing requires scrubbing the hands for at least 40 seconds using soap and warm water. Hands should be thoroughly rinsed for at least 20 seconds. When washing the hands, the workers should pay special attention to the back of the hands and fingernails, which should be trimmed and kept clean. Hands should be thoroughly dried with a paper towel. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the bathroom door.





# Swimming safety

## Water safety supervision and control

Camp directors need to be cognizant that local municipality and state codes may vary considerably for swimming pool operations. Investigation of current codes should be on the checklist of pre-opening preparations to ensure camps comply with any requirements regarding the number of certified lifeguards on duty when the pool facilities are in use. Some states may require a pool operator's license for the lifeguards and an annual renewal of operating permits. Pools must be equipped with a barrier and entrance self-closing gate to prevent unauthorized use of the pool facilities. Restricting access to the pool is important for the safety of all swimmers. Prior to allowing swimmers to enter the water, camp counselors should conduct a skill evaluation to ensure swimmers are matched and permitted to swim only in areas equal to their abilities.

### At pools, lakes, ponds or beaches

First, campers should never swim alone. Using the buddy system means there's always someone looking out for you. Campers should understand that swimming in a pool is different than swimming in a lake or the ocean - there are different hazards for each. Here are some tips:

### At the lake or pond

- Don't let anyone swim without adult supervision - lakes or ponds may be shallow near the bank and then increase in depth sharply as the swimmer moves further out into the water.
- Ponds and lakes may hide jagged rocks, broken glass or trash. Diving should be restricted to designated safe areas or eliminated entirely.

- Make sure swimmers wear some form of foot protection, like swimming shoes, even while in the water.
- Watch out for weeds and grass that could entangle swimmers' legs or arms.
- Most boating accidents, particularly among teenagers, are related to alcohol. Be sure teens know alcohol is not permitted at any time. Camps should simply not permit alcohol use.

### At the beach

- Only permit swimming at the beach when and where a lifeguard is on duty in designated areas away from piers or pilings.
- Unlike the calm waters of a swimming pool, the beach has special dangers like currents and tides. Check with the lifeguard when you arrive to find out about the water conditions.
- Swimmers should not be allowed in large waves or undertows. Swimmers should be warned to never stand with their backs to the water because a sudden wave can easily knock them over.

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# Sun protection

Camp directors should advise campers of the basic protection guidelines for exposure to the sun when the sun's rays are strongest, usually between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Counselors should encourage campers, at a minimum, to wear a broad-spectrum (protection against both UVA and UVB rays) sunscreen and lip screen with at least SPF 15. Protective clothing, such as a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt and long pants will also provide considerable help when trying to avoid the sun's harmful rays. For eye protection, wear wrap-around sunglasses that provide 100 percent UV ray protection. Keep in mind that sunscreen is not meant to allow campers to spend more time in the sun. Sunscreen used with other sun protection, e.g., long sleeve shirts, hats and sunglasses will help provide greater levels of protection.



  
**Choose Your Cover**

-  **Seek Shade from UV rays during, especially during midday**
-  **Cover Up to protect exposed skin**
-  **Get a Hat with a wide brim**
-  **Grab Shades that block both UVA and UVB rays**
-  **Rub On Sunscreen – at least SPF 15 or higher and both UVA and UVB protection**

Figure 2 Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

## Swimming safety *(continued)*

- Teach swimmers that if they are caught in a rip current or undertow, they should swim parallel to the shore or should tread water and call for a lifeguard's help.
- The stings of jellyfish or Portuguese man-of-wars can be very painful. If jellyfish or Portuguese man-of-wars are observed in the water, swimming should be suspended. Instruct swimmers to avoid these fish and report any sightings in the water and to tell an adult right away if stung.

### Weather

If at the lake, pool or the beach, teach swimmers to get out of the water during bad weather, especially during the sound of thunder or observed lightning.



## Special supplement – hand washing for food handlers and campers

Following trips to the washroom and before eating or preparing food, both food handlers and campers should follow good hand washing techniques.

### Good hand washing techniques:

1. Wet your hands with warm water.
2. Use lots of soap and rub your hands together to build up a good lather.
3. Wash between your fingers, the backs of your hands, your thumbs, your palms and your wrists.
4. Pay careful attention to your fingernails. Use a nailbrush if available.
5. Wash your hands for at least 40 seconds.
6. Rinse well while rubbing hands together.
7. Dry thoroughly with a paper towel.
8. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the bathroom door.

### Técnica correcta para lavar las manos

1. Mojar las manos con agua caliente.
2. Usar bastante jabón y frotar las manos juntas para hacer bastante espuma.
3. Lavar entre los dedos, arriba de las manos, las palmas, y las muñecas.
4. Poner atención en limpiar las uñas. Úsese un cepilló si es disponible.
5. Lavar las manos por 40 segundos.
6. Enjuagar las manos bien a la misma vez que se frotan.
7. Secar las manos completamente con una toalla de papel.
8. Usar una toalla de papel para cerrar la llave del agua y para abrir la puerta del baño.

# Lessons of loss

## NIOSH

A 17-year-old female lifeguard died after she fell into a nearly empty swimming pool. On the day of the incident, a crew of four, including the victim, two other lifeguards and the pool engineer were preparing the pool for the new season. One lifeguard and the pool engineer were working in the filter room while the victim and another lifeguard were in the pool, cleaning the floor and sides of the L-shaped pool.

The co-worker was cleaning the pool at a location where he could not see the victim when he heard a “thump.” He looked up and observed the diving board, which had been placed on its rack the previous day but not secured, falling into the pool. He ran around the corner of the L-shaped pool and saw the victim lying face down in several inches of water in the deepest part of the pool (11 feet, 6 inches deep). The co-worker turned the victim’s face up to prevent her from drowning, moved her out of the water toward the west end of the pool where the pool was less steeply sloped and called out for help. He stayed with the victim until help arrived. The lifeguard and the pool engineer heard the co-worker’s call for help and immediately called 911, then went to help the victim. Police and fire department personnel determined the victim had a pulse, respiration and severe head injuries. The victim was taken by ambulance to an area hospital and then flown to a regional trauma center where she was pronounced dead three days after the incident.

Extensive training was provided to lifeguards to help them safeguard themselves and the public while performing lifeguard duties when the pool was open to the public. However, there was no training provided to alert both lifeguards and other workers of the hazards present during seasonal maintenance activities.



A 15-year-old male camp counselor (the victim) died of carbon monoxide poisoning when the furnace malfunctioned in the cabin where he was sleeping. The victim and another staff person slept in the building the night before the incident, and used the furnace for a brief time with no known problems.

On the night of the incident, the victim was the only person assigned to sleep in the health services building. He went to the building about 8:30 p.m. and chose a sleeping area which shared a wall with the rear of the furnace room. The weather service recorded a low temperature of 59° F for that evening. The victim kept the windows and doors closed. He apparently used the toggle switch to turn the furnace on and went to sleep.

When the victim didn’t show up for breakfast the next morning, a supervisor went to the building and found him motionless in bed. Emergency services were summoned and EMS arrived at the scene within 25 minutes. The first responders found no signs of life in the victim, then exited the building until the sheriff arrived. The coroner was called to the scene and pronounced the victim dead.

The structure lacked sources of outside air for combustion purposes, nor was there a source of outside air for air exchange to the occupied areas. The furnace thermostat would not shut off the furnace when the desired temperature was reached, so camp staff routinely used a toggle switch on the office wall to turn the furnace on and off as needed. There were no records to indicate when the furnace and water heater had been inspected or repaired. The building lacked carbon monoxide detectors.

## References

<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/chooseyourcover/>

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Country of Origin: U.S. RiskTopics – Food handler hygiene

Zurich – 4-3.002 October 1995

Country of Origin: U.S. RiskTopics – Swimming pool safety, supervision and control

<http://www.campparents.org/>

<http://www.acacamps.org/>

RiskSolutions – Internet resources for sports, recreation, camping, aquatics, playground

For more information about ACA accreditation, contact Allison MacMunn at [amacmunn@ACAcamps.org](mailto:amacmunn@ACAcamps.org)

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