



SAFETY FIRST

Tips to keep facilities in good working order while protecting your ministry

On the list of things to address at your camp or conference center, safety often falls to the bottom, behind important things like finances, programming, facilities and employees. While those things are all essential to running your ministry effectively, making safety a priority keeps your ministry running, period. Missteps in safety can lead to fallout that can affect your camp or conference center both legally and financially.

When Paul Sherrill and his team conduct annual audits at Young Life (YL) camp properties across the country every summer, he reinforces the same lessons that he has taught in workshops at CCCA's national conference. In his role as vice president of administrative services, he and his team ensure that YL properties are following protocols that keep things running smoothly, alert them to potential trouble spots and allow camp to carry on throughout the year. ►



Photo courtesy of Lake Ann Camp



Jen Howver was once a camp kid who later spent two summers working at a camp in Michigan, where she met and later married her husband, Jay. Fast forward 20 years and now Jen works as a marketing consultant and editor of InSite magazine. She and Jay live in Monument, Colorado, with their daughters, Noelle and Chloe, and way too many pets.



Paul Sherrill has served as the vice president of administrative services at Young Life for the past 15 years. He provides executive-level leadership over operations and administrative support services, focusing on developing processes, programs, and systems to support growth while mitigating all types of risk to personal, structural and operational assets. He supervises as many as 30 employees while managing four separate large-scale budgets, is highly involved with benefits/insurance/investment plans, corporate governance, legal issues and acquisitions.

Safety Everywhere

No matter the role at your camp or conference center, each person is responsible for safety. Whether it's the proper use of equipment or paying attention to potential risks on trails, every member of your staff should know how to address safety issues on your property.

To ensure that all the members of your team know what is expected, include safety policies in your governing documents, mission statement, job descriptions, your program and training.

When it comes to training your staff on safety issues, provide ample time before the start of a job or project for training to take place. Track the training, model it and measure it to ensure that your camp is doing everything it can to create a safe environment for your guests and staff.

Day-to-Day Management

There are several software programs available to help track issues that are found around the property. It's essential that records be kept of not only the problems but also the solutions that are implemented and the timeline of repair or replacement.

Young Life utilizes the computerized maintenance management system (CMMS) from Maintenance Connection. This allows staff at every property to track daily the items that are in need of repair, and especially those things that could lead to safety hazards.

When using a CMMS, any liability situation that is related to issues with the site or facilities is documented in terms of how you managed the repairs, how quickly you addressed them and if there's been a recurring problem.

At YL camps, there are "DIN" lists all around the facility. DIN stands for "Do it now," and when anyone on staff finds an issue, whether it's a light switch that's not working, an overflowing toilet or a tree root causing a trip hazard on a path, they can add the item to the list. The maintenance team collects the DIN list items and puts them into the CMMS, and at that point, the team has an up-to-date to-do list every day. They're able to stay on top of issues, no matter how small or large.

The maintenance department is responsible for site areas where programs take place, such as obstacle courses. They look for trip hazards or branches that could injure someone. If the obstacle course takes place at night, the team inspects at night to ensure there's enough lighting to make it safe for participants.

On challenge courses at the YL camps, their certified operators are not part of the maintenance staff, but they are responsible for safety checks for ropes courses, rock walls, etc.

Annual Audits

When Sherrill and his team conduct the annual audits of YL camp properties, they use an internal audit checklist that they have created, which is gone through line by line. The audit areas include repairs items, fire safety, security, grounds maintenance, plumbing and more.

Sherrill then creates an audit safety report, identifying things that are not in compliance and need to be fixed, trained on, etc. The camp then has 60 days to respond to and make changes to improve safety.

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However it works best for your facility to document, track and manage all the areas of camp concerning safety, be sure that it's a top priority and that every team member knows that they play an essential role in keeping guests and staff safe. ■

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