Are You Really Prepared?

By John Dougan, senior risk control specialist, Adventist Risk Management

When we think of campus safety from an emergency preparedness perspective, some of the first thoughts that come to mind are fire and probably the most prevalent natural hazard for our location: earthquake, tornado, hurricane, etc. It is crucial, however, that we don’t stop there. A total risk control and risk management program must consider all potential exposures to campus safety and possible disruption of school operations, and must plan appropriately for them.

Are you prepared to take on an event as horrific and devastating as that which struck a peaceful little Amish school or bustling Virginia Tech, or even a single assault or death on your campus? Are you ready should your campus be affected by a train derailment, tanker truck crash or chemical plant disaster that results in the release of deadly gases or chemicals that require evacuation or “sheltering in place?”

Are you ready if your campus is affected by a pandemic flu outbreak that could tax your human and financial resources beyond the imagination? Are you prepared for an “in house” chemical release, spill and contamination, or a tragic suicide, medical emergency, transportation accident or fire?

As you look at your overall program, have you analyzed your assets and potential hazards and determined your vulnerabilities? Have you worked with local authorities in developing a comprehensive emergency crisis preparedness plan? Have you held tabletop exercises and actual drills? Have you put measures in place that will have your school up and operating following a disaster, even if you lose use of a building or possibly the whole campus for an extended period of time?

Putting the Pieces Together

While it is impossible to avert every disaster or loss that could potentially occur at a school, measures must be taken to:

- Identify exposures the school could face
- Prevent occurrences, where possible
- Establish emergency crisis preparedness plans that provide the appropriate response to an event to reduce the impact and

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Is it a good idea to use cell phones as toys? Well, I’m guilty; I do let little Lucy play her games on my cell phone from time to time – not daily – I try to keep this activity as a novelty for “special situations”. However, even though I’m guilty, I am still aware that there are inherent dangers to this type of toy.

For one, I have to carefully monitor what types of games I download for her – the content, the intent, the graphics and music are all carefully scrutinized. (I actually need to find an application developer/writer who will work with me to create the types of applications I would approve of!)

Secondly, I know there are other, physical dangers such as radiation exposure, Bisphenol A, arsenic, various other chemicals and small parts. So here, in brief, are some of the most concerning points about using cell phones as toys.

**Radiation**

Cellular phones release trace radiation. Many articles warn parents of cancer and other risks associated with exposure to radiation. Although the research doesn’t appear to be strong enough for a ban, many studies indicate radiation from cell phones, handsets and their antennas may lead to brain tumors, genetic damage, leukemia, headaches, anxiety, depression, attention span problems and sleep disorders. Children are considered more prone to damage due to cell-phone use because they have thinner skulls.

**BPAs**

Bisphenol A (BPA) is found in polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins. Polycarbonate plastics are often used in containers that store food and beverages, such as water bottles, and baby bottles and cups. They may also be used in toys and other consumer goods. Epoxy resins can be used to coat the inside of metal products, such as food cans, baby formula cans, bottle tops and water supply lines. Some dental sealants and composites also may contain BPA. And certain thermal paper products, such as cash register receipts, may contain BPA (MayoClinic.com).

Research reported at MayoClinic.com says the Food and Drug Administration is concerned about the effects of BPA on brain development in infants. MayoClinic.com recommends BPA-free bottles, plates and food storage for babies. Though the article speaks specifically to the subject of food containers, the BPAs in cell phones pose similar dangers.

**Other Chemical Hazards**

There are at least 200 million cell phones in use across the country and another 500 million older phones may be stockpiled in drawers, closets and elsewhere, waiting to be thrown away.

Cell phones, along with other "wireless waste" from increasingly popular pagers, pocket PCs and music players, pose special problems at landfills or when they're burned in municipal waste incinerators because they have toxic chemicals in batteries and other components, said the report.

These include persistent toxins that accumulate in the environment, including arsenic, antimony, beryllium, cadmium, copper, lead, nickel and zinc, said the report. These toxins have been associated with cancer and neurological disorders, especially in children.

**Physical Dangers**

As a general rule, tools used by adults should not be used as toys for children because they can be choking hazards. Many cell phones are too large to fit in baby's mouth, let alone choke her. However, cell phones have smaller parts that may be removed and broken off. These might choke or cut on jagged edges.

**The Bottom Line**

So, the bottom line is this: Using old cell phones in an early childhood classroom is not really a good idea. Just like television and movies, mom and dad will allow these aplenty outside of school hours. Teachers should maximize their time with the children for relationship and skill building.

Will I forbid little Lucy from playing with my cell phone? Probably not; but I will continue to limit her usage and exposure and I’ll be sure to put it in “airplane mode” so it won’t search for a signal—which means it’s not supposed to emit radiation.

BTW – I have no intention of my preteen or teenager having a personal cell phone. I haven’t crossed that bridge yet, but…

Resources:

The Danger of Cell Phones

What are the Dangers of Babies Playing with Cell Phones

Study: Cell Phone Waste Harmful

What is BPA?
http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bpa/AN01955
The Purposes of ACCN:

1. To affirm, encourage and empower all engaged in the weekday ministry to children.
2. To provide opportunities for professional and spiritual growth.
3. To provide networking opportunities for Seventh-day Adventist Child Development Centers.
4. To set certification standards for child care providers.
5. To foster unity between all areas of child development within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
6. To encourage the incorporation of Early Childhood Education in the nurture and outreach programs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
7. To foster working relationships with the world church, unions, conferences, local churches, and schools.
8. To encourage surveys and research in the area of Child Development and Early Childhood Education in cooperation with the North American Division.
9. To counsel with the North American Division and General Conference in the development and review of programs and strategies for Child Development.
10. To provide guidance and resources to training organizations, colleges, and universities.
11. To advocate the hiring of Early Childhood specialists at all organizational levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
12. To develop working relationships with other Early Childhood Education organizations.
13. To encourage child care centers to obtain national accreditation.

ValueGenesis and CognitiveGenesis research conducted recently highlights the upward trends! A developing faith in students that embraces a loving Redeemer God and prepares them to respond to His call for service in the community and around the globe has been documented. The student learning results that exceed the norm, exceed the predictive measures, and are continued on page 4.
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- Train teachers and staff regarding their responsibilities in the event of an occurrence;
- Hold appropriate table top and actual drills to help ensure proper response by all parties;
- Analyze drills and make the necessary corrections to the response plan and staff responsibilities.

It may be easy to develop a fire evacuation plan and carry out routine drills, a total plan encompassing all recognized exposures requires review and input from a knowledgeable team that can evaluate the risks and establish appropriate response plans with input from local authorities.

The crisis management team will ultimately be tasked with establishing protocols and priorities that address:

1. Protection of Human Life
2. Support of Health and Safety Operations
3. Protection of Assets
4. Maintenance of Operations
5. Assessment of Damages
6. Restoration of General Campus Operations

Develop a Plan

Once the team is in place, break down the development of the Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness Program into small, manageable bites. We can do this by first making a list of potential exposures and prioritizing them with those most likely to occur at the top, followed by those with less likelihood of an occurrence. While fire and natural hazards might top the list, the degree to which an activity occurs might affect the likelihood of a loss.

Potential Exposures (partial list)

- Fire
- Natural Elements (tornado, hurricane, hailstorms, wind, flood, snow and ice storms)
- Chemical Spills and Hazardous Materials
- Utility Emergencies
- Forced or Unauthorized Entries
- Forced or Unauthorized Removal of Children
- Violence and/or Threats
- Bomb Threats
- Weapons on Campus

Are You Ready?

Crisis planning in your school is no easy task. It is an ongoing, never-ending project of the administration, crisis management team, and others. Done well, it can reduce injuries and losses and reduce downtime following a crisis; it can also present a positive image to staff, students, parents/families and the community as well. Done poorly, it will lead to additional crises you do not even want to think about.

Plan well, and do not assume. To paraphrase words by Bruce Blythe, CEO of Crisis Management International, Inc., in his article Virginia Tech Shootings: Crisis Magnifies the Significance of Small Weakness, if we are going to assume anything ever, anywhere, we should assume the worst, respond accordingly and pray for the best.

ACCN is encouraging early childhood center directors to attend this event. Contact your local conference Office of Education for more information!

Teacher Convention

yielded in any Adventist school by dedicated Adventist teachers has been confirmed by the data. What a great privilege and huge responsibility we have in partnership with the Master Teacher to bring His students to the Kingdom.