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Ensure that all gas or electric elements have been turned off before you leave the kitchen.

I am Thankful

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving in the United States. I know I need to spend more time in a spirit of thanksgiving. So this is a list of some of the more obvious things I am thankful for, starting with you, the readers of this newsletter/blog.

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In today’s world, the ability to keep children safe from sex offenders has become one of the top priorities for risk management professionals and a critical focus of family prevention.
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I am Thankful

David Fournier posted on November 23, 2011 17:00

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving in the United States. A day when many reunite with family, watch football and eat way too much. It is a day set aside for gratitude and thanksgiving.

I know I need to spend more time in a spirit of thanksgiving. So this is a list of some of the more obvious things I am thankful for, starting with you, the readers of this newsletter/blog.

I am grateful to ARM's business partners

We work with some amazing partners who provide an incredibly diverse range of products and services. Being able to provide “one stop shopping” to a worldwide organization would not be possible without the enthusiastic support of our business partners.

I am SO GRATEFUL to the Communications team

I have been so blessed with wonderful members of the Marketing and Communications team. Although this year has seen some changes, the contributions and creativity of each team member has left its mark.

I am grateful to The ARM team

The ARM team is comprised of some of the most diverse and motivated people I have ever met. Facing a dynamic clientele and changing market takes creativity and energy. They take on each risk management challenge with vision, experience and devotion to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

I am grateful to all of the Risk Managers

I am talking about the risk managers at the local church, at the schools and universities, at the hospital and conference offices. These are the front lines of defense against theft, injury and other types of losses. Risk management is about caring for those things and people in your trust. It is about good stewardship and I am so often encouraged when I meet those engaged in this service.

I am grateful to the Attendees of the Risk Management Conference

This year was my first time helping to coordinate the Risk Management Conference for the North American Division. The attendees are a fascinating group of people entrusted from conference and academy treasurers to benefit coordinators and human resource specialists. Being able to share with them, to hear from them, was a rich learning experience for me. They were fun to be with as we enjoyed the conference together.

I am grateful for MITMAR

MITMAR is the company that we are working with to “change the engine” of our website. They have worked miracles with an incredible amount of data. Creating a website that is easy to use for such a complex type of business and such a diverse client base
is NO SMALL TASK.

I am grateful to my laptop

I had to say it. I know most people fight with their technology but mine really just stays out of the way of my productivity. It never has problems and constantly amazes me. Cool, huh!

I am grateful to my family

I have been so blessed in this area. My family is a constant source of support and inspiration to me…and they keep me humble!

I am grateful to YOU

I am thankful that you are reading these articles, for asking questions, for constructive criticism. I am thankful that you care about safety, stewardship and doing the right thing. Thank you for working with us!

Our ministry is to protect your ministry.

By David Fournier
Marketing & Communications Manager, Adventist Risk Management.

Posted in: November 2011
Keeping Children, Churches, and Schools Safe From Sex Offenders–Part 1

Carina Franca posted on November 23, 2011 17:00

In today’s world, the ability to keep children safe from sex offenders has become one of the top priorities for risk management professionals and a critical focus of family prevention education. The personal accounts of child abuse are heartbreaking, and the numbers of sexual crimes committed against children are staggering. Studies continue to suggest that one in five children will be sexually abused during childhood and that most sex offenders commit dozens of crimes before they are apprehended.

One study estimated that the apprehension rate for sex offenders is only about three percent, and another suggested that one out of every 20 males has sexually abused a child. Experts suspect that female offenders go undetected more often than males, and that one-third of the people molesting children are other children. Studies on offenders who have been caught also suggest that most commit a variety of “cross over” crimes prior to apprehension.

When sex offenders are referred to treatment programs that use polygraphs and require “full disclosure,” many admit that they abused both young children and adolescents, and both male and female minors. Some also admit that they crossed an additional boundary and sexually assaulted adults.

Offenders also engage in ancillary crimes, such as exhibitionism or voyeurism, or the use of online child pornography, a crime that appears to be the single fastest growing sexual crime in history. Given the numbers and the range of undetected behaviors, it’s easy to understand the limitations of relying on “background checks” as our only method of insuring safety when screening new staff or volunteers.

In addition to the data on child abuse, the truth about the relationships abusers have with children, their motivation for offending, and the grooming tactics they use is even more disturbing. The majority of offenders are the people children come in contact with every day–parents and step-parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, siblings, family friends, teachers and coaches. Very few, perhaps less than five percent, are “strangers.”

This means that the “prevention talks” parents need to have with their children are much more uncomfortable and complicated than most of us heard when we were children. Offenders are also extremely adept at seducing children in a non-threatening and sometimes “playful” and tricky manner, which makes children feel like “partners,” rather than victims. Because of the tactics perpetrators use, most children fail to understand that they are being abused until it’s too late. Children report that once the abuse starts, they feel trapped and are unable to tell anyone because of the subtle threats and manipulation.

Studies indicate that fewer than 10% of children report the abuse while it’s happening, and that the majority of victims wait until they become adults to disclose their abuse. One of the most disheartening statistics that has emerged from offender studies is that more than half of all abusers report that other adults knew they were abusing children and failed to report them to the police. According to the offenders, not being “turned in” resulted in additional victims, and caused the offenders’ own problems to get worse. As Christians, we must do a better job of protecting children but to do a better job, we must first understand the problem.
One of the issues parents and risk management professionals need to understand is the developmental process that causes people to engage in sexually criminal behavior. Although a primary concern is protection of children from being victimized, they must also be taught to avoid the kind of early sexualization that results in sexual acting out. If we continue to battle this problem after it has fully matured, it will never be reduced. It’s like treating a disease when it’s in its final stage, instead of the early stage.

Nearly two decades ago, studies proved that most sex offenders were not molested as children, but that most started offending when they were young. Many offenders were exposed to pornography early in life, or became overly involved in, and/or overly stimulated by sexual exploration and sexual play behavior (“show and tell”) with other children.

Early sexual curiosity is a normal part of development and most children move past the curiosity, or “exploration stage” quickly. For children who get “stuck” there, sexual acting out can develop into a method of dealing with stress, frustration, anxiety, or boredom. As the behavior becomes more routine, or perhaps, more stimulating, children and teens can develop distorted attitudes about the appropriateness of sexual contact with children, and eroticize children.

Over time, they develop sophisticated methods of engaging other children in sexual activity. Some children stop molesting children on their own, but for others, it can become a life-long pattern of offending.

Parents need to talk to their children about avoiding and reporting abuse. They also need to discuss with them about not touching other children inappropriately. None of us want our children to be abused, but we also don’t want our children to grow up to become sex offenders.

Future articles in this series will offer additional information about offender behavior and “grooming” tactics, tips for talking to children about sexual abuse and recognizing behavior problems, recommendations for family rules, and risk management principles for dealing with sexual abuse in church and school settings. Remember, child sexual abuse is not a burden children can handle alone. The responsibility for protecting children is an adult responsibility.

Bibliography:


By Cory Jewell Jensen, M.S.

Cory Jewell Jensen, M.S. is a United Methodist “PK” from Lake Oswego, Oregon and a long time consultant to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She is the Co-Director of one of the largest and oldest sex offender evaluation and treatment programs in Oregon and has worked with adult sex offenders and their families for 28 years. Ms. Jensen has provided training and consultation to a number of law enforcement, child advocacy and Faith based organizations throughout the United States and Canada. She has also published a number of articles about sex offenders and risk management, testified as an expert witness, been the recipient of numerous awards, served on numerous committees to prevent child abuse, and been a featured guest on radio talk shows, and the Oprah Winfrey Show.
Are You Happy At Work?  Do you feel bored with the routine or do you feel your job is insignificant?  Do you think your talents and abilities are underused? 

Choosing to make some changes may help your satisfaction level on the job. Here are a few suggestions some have found useful in improving their working situation and environment:

1. Do something you love daily.
   You may or may not love your current job. Find something in your current job to love. Take a look at yourself, your skills and interests, and find something that you can enjoy doing every day. If you do something you love every single day, your current job won't seem so bad.

2. Take charge of your own professional and personal development.
   You are the person with the most to gain from continuing to develop professionally. Take charge of your own growth. Ask for specific and meaningful help from your boss, but march to the music of your personally developed plan and goals. You have the most to gain from growing—and the most to lose, if you stand still.

3. Be informed.
   People complain that they don't receive enough communication and information about what is happening with their company, their department's projects, or their coworkers. As passive vessels, they wait for the boss to fill them up with knowledge. And, the knowledge rarely comes. Why? Because the boss is busy doing his/her job and doesn't know what you don't know. Seek out the information you need to work effectively. Develop an information network and use it. You are in charge of the information you receive.

4. Ask for feedback frequently.
   Have you made statements such as, “My boss never gives me any feedback, so I never know how I'm doing.” If you're not positive about your work, think about improving and making a sincere contribution. Make a list of goals you would like to accomplish at work, and then discuss this list with your boss. Tell him/her you'd really like to hear his/her assessment of your work. You are responsible for your own development.

5. Make only commitments you can keep.
   One of the most serious causes of work stress and unhappiness is failing to keep commitments. Many employees spend more time making excuses for failing to keep a commitment, and worrying about the consequences of not keeping a commitment, than they do performing the tasks promised. Often they will allow themselves to be overloaded with work assignments and end up feeling crushed under all the pressure.
Create a system of organization and planning that enables you to assess your ability to complete a requested commitment. Don’t volunteer if you don’t have time. If your workload is exceeding your available time and energy, make a comprehensive plan to ask for help and resources. Don’t wallow in the swamp of un-kept promises.

6. Avoid negativity.

Choosing to be happy at work means avoiding negative conversations, gossip, and unhappy people as much as possible. No matter how positively you feel, negative people have a profound impact on your psyche. Don’t let the negative “Neds and Nellies” bring you down. Concentrate instead, on things and on people that improve your mood, help you laugh, and give you joy.

7. Practice professional courtesy.

Refrain from gossip and criticism. Use of words like “please” and “thank-you.” Have consideration of others. Use pleasant greetings. Have a kind and helpful attitude. These and other professional courtesy manners will go a long way toward making the working environment pleasant and productive.

8. Make friends at work.

Take a little time at work to be friendly, perhaps provide a surprise for a co-worker, or share something of interest. Participate in events of staff celebrations: a birthday, an achievement, a wedding, etc. Liking and enjoying your coworkers are hallmarks of a positive, happy work experience. Your network provides support, resources, sharing, and caring.

9. Remember to take care of yourself.

Following good life-style health principles will give you a head-start towards not only feeling good but also will promote adequate physical energy and mental attitude to work effectively and cheerfully.

10. Principles to rely on:

Care daily for your spiritual devotional time—start your day connecting to the True Source of power and peace.
Get some exercise every day—help your body help you.
Eat a good breakfast for adequate fuel supply.
Drink 6-8 glasses of water to keep all systems functioning effectively.
Be sure to get enough sleep at night to avoid that tired, sluggish, run-down feeling.

By Rae Lee Cooper, RN
Health Ministries Department, General Conference of SDA

Posted in: November 2011

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Recently, a 5.6 magnitude earthquake startled many Oklahoma residents. Much speculation has occurred as to why a state that has only had approximately 50 recorded small quakes until 2009 should experience such a large one now.

Tornadoes, earthquakes, snow and ice storms, etc., are occurring increasingly in unusual areas of the country. Preparation for the unexpected could save the lives of your family and yourself.

Some important factors for earthquake survival

When the unexpected occurs it is critical to have a family emergency plan that is already in place. Review with family members the places in your home that should be avoided and areas that can be used for protection during an earthquake.

While it's important to prepare for a quake many people often panic when debris and buildings are flying through the air. Here are several crucial steps to take for protection.

- Drop to the ground and take cover.
- Find stable furniture. Crawl under it and hold on to the legs. If you don't have furniture, then crouch on the inside corner of a building. Protect your head by covering it with your hands and arms.
- Stay away from windows, glass, doors, walls, lightning fixtures, or furniture that might fall over during the earthquake.
- If you are in bed, stay there and hold on. Use a pillow to protect yourself from falling debris.
- Use a doorway for protection, only if it is supported well and close by.
- Stay inside until the shaking stops. Studies have shown that walking or running around buildings or on streets raises the risk of injuries.
- Be prepared for the sprinkler system to activate.
- Do not use elevators. Even if it's working, aftershocks can cause them to shut down.
- If you are in a hotel, stay in your room, especially after the rumbling has stopped. Sometimes aftershocks are worse than the actual earthquake. Look for a desk to crawl under or the nearest corner.
- Avoid desks connected to a bookcase.
- When the walls or ceiling begin to collapse, lay next to a couch, desk, or heavy piece of furniture. As the debris falls it often creates a triangular shape, decreasing the probability of you being crushed.

Help me, I'm trapped!

If you find yourself underneath fallen debris it's important to not move or kick dust. Inhaling the dust can be harmful. Do not light a match. Nearby items could catch fire. An open flame could also cause an explosion if there are any nearby gas leaks from broken or damaged lines.

Save your energy and voice by using a whistle to alert rescuers or by tapping on a pipe or a wall.

Use a cloth, handkerchief, or even your shirt to cover your mouth and protect yourself from the dust.
Driving during an earthquake

During an earthquake there are several factors to remember while driving. If you see other cars pulling over and feel your car shaking, think "possible earthquake." Don't stop in the middle of the highway or street. Turn on your right hand turn signal. Slow down and carefully move over until you are in the emergency lane.

Once you are stopped, be sure to stay inside the car. Avoid parking near large clumps of trees, overpasses, buildings, or utility wires. Once the shaking has stopped proceed slowly and with caution. Avoid bridges, roads, or ramps that have been damaged. Slowing down and being aware of your surroundings increases your safety as you try to reach home.

Being outside during an earthquake

Immediately move away from any buildings that are beginning to fall apart. Don't run or walk around during the earthquake. Research has shown that most earthquake-related injuries happen because of flying objects, glass, and collapsing walls.

If you've survived a large earthquake unharmed, your next step should be to check on your neighbors. Find out who needs help. Listen to the radio for emergency updates and news and inform others. Work with others to organize rescue teams, but be very careful of falling debris or aftershocks, which could cause more buildings to fall.

If you live near the coast, stay away from the beach. Pay attention to the news for possible tsunamis.

Trying to return to normal

The earthquake has ended–now what?

- Limit time on the phone for emergency calls.
- Go to a public shelter if your home is damaged. To find the closest shelter, text the word “shelter” plus your zip code to 43362 (4FEMA).
- Stay away from damaged areas, unless authorities need your assistance, or they say it's okay to go back home.
- Drive safely when on the road. Be prepared for traffic light power outages.
- When you return to your home open cabinets cautiously. Objects can fall off the shelves when you open the cupboards.
- Wear long sleeve shirts, long pants, sturdy shoes, and work gloves to protect yourself while working and picking up debris around your home.
- Immediately clean up spilled medications, bleaches, gas, or flammable liquids. Check for gas leaks. Leave the area if you smell gas or fumes from other chemicals.
- Inspect the entire length of your chimney for damage to avoid potential fires.
- Look for electrical system damage.
- Check for sewage and water line damage.

By Deena Bartell-Wagner
Editor, Verbal Oxygen

Posted in: November 2011

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On a rare day off from work, I visited the Ebenezer Church, a renovated historical church, in the Sweet Auburn Area of Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. served as the pastor of this church before his death.

The edifice gleamed with cleanliness and grandeur and the church seemed well kept. In fact, even the items from the renovation that were saved still looked in pretty good shape. I did not have to wonder about their perspective on safety. However, I did read that one of their ministries is “Building and Grounds.”

Yes, they have a whole ministry devoted to the building and the grounds. This is not to say their perspective for having this ministry also correlates with their perspective of safety. However, I will suggest that having the mindset to maintain your church will lead to an environment that is safe. Why, you ask? Here are some ideas about church beautification/maintenance activities and how they automatically incorporate safety.

Grounds Maintenance—The simple task of walking the grounds and picking up trash can alert you to any potential hazards that might be lurking. There could be anthills or holes in the ground, especially in rural areas. The biggest tripping hazard would be cracks in the sidewalks and parking lot. To avoid this, check the grounds weekly.

Flooring—Nothing says, “We don’t care” like torn carpets and damaged floors. This is also another slip and fall hazard. Determine the extent of the damage and correct it as much as possible until it can be replaced.

Windows—Broken windows also scream “we do not care.” It suggests easy access to your property and can influence vandalism or criminal behavior. Always have broken windows repaired immediately.

How to start your beautification project

If you are the safety officer, start by organizing a committee. This should be done in consultation with the church board and the pastor. The committee should meet at least quarterly. During the meetings discuss all aspects safety during church activities, from grounds to contingency planning.

Do a self-inspection of your church. Adventist Risk Management has an extensive “Church Self-Inspection” form on our website (www.adventistrisk.org). This form will help your committee identify safety items that also improve the look of the church, such as parking lot repairs.

Third, set a budget, date for completion of the project and then begin putting everything in place. Again, these items should be brought before the church board for approval.

Sign-up volunteers according to their skill sets. Depending on the project you may need to ask them to bring the appropriate tools for their work. Some jobs may be too technical for volunteers. Examples of this would include cutting down trees, roofing jobs on buildings that have a very steep pitch, etc. Use experts for these types of situations.
Ensure that the project is well organized and that you are ready to utilize all volunteers efficiently on the day of the project. If unregistered volunteers use a sign-up sheet to assign them to the appropriate tasks.

It is all about planning. Decide your desired results and know that you can achieve them. Make sure your volunteers are educated on not taking big risks and designate difficult jobs for the professionals. Make it fun, but above all, be safe.

By Monica Allen
Field Service, Adventist Risk Management

Posted in: November 2011

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