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Social Media

SPAM

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It Won’t Happen to Me

Young or old, none of us are invincible. I know. As I type this article, I do it with only half of an index finger on my left hand. Flashback to 1973 and a small car dealership in California's high desert where I was employed as a mechanic. I was trying to find the cause of a simple squeak in a brand new Chevy pickup.

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Lessons from a Hospital Fire

Kolkata is one of the four megacities in India, having a population of about 14.5 million people. The deadliest fire tragedy in its history at AMRI hospital, a very modern facility with state-of-the-art equipment, claimed more than 93 lives and many more were injured.

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Meet the Team

Jermaine recently won an “Employee of the Year” award at ARM. He received this award because of his willingness to use his education and spiritual gifts to further the work of church. He takes his goals seriously and works with passion to do extraordinary work.

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“Jay” was the president of a local college and an elder in the church. His wife volunteered as a teacher for children’s ministries and the couple’s teenaged daughters were active in the youth group. When the family agreed to host a foreign exchange student, everyone at church welcomed the high school girl with open arms.

Six months later, the student disclosed to a school counselor that Jay had been sexually abusing her. When police interviewed Jay’s daughters, one of them acknowledged that Jay had been abusing her as well. Jay adamantly denied that he “would never hurt a child,” but when the allegations became public, another young woman said Jay had behaved inappropriately toward her during a church outing several years earlier.

As the criminal case went forward, people took sides. Some said they’d known Jay for years and refused to believe that he could have done any of the things the girls said he did. Other people supported Jay’s wife and daughters and were angry that Jay’s supporters were further victimizing the girls by accusing them of lying. Jay was eventually convicted and sentenced to prison but the church was left to deal with the aftermath of what he’d done and how people had reacted to the allegations. It took years for the church to get past the damage and just as the wounds were healing, Jay was released from prison.

Upon his release, Jay asked the pastor if he could return to church. The pastor told Jay he’d have to consult with the elders. Jay’s family still attended the church and people had strong feelings
about what he’d done and how they should respond to his request. No one knew how to handle the situation. Jay eventually opted to join a church that was not aware of his past, and perhaps, less prepared to deal with him.

Sex offenders can impact churches in a variety of ways. Even if the offenses didn’t occur on church property or during a church related activity, the consequence can be disastrous. If the offender was a church leader, Pathfinder or Adventurer volunteer, teacher or pastor, the repercussions are usually worse, especially if the offender met and “groomed” the victim and his/her family at church. Granted, there aren’t any policies that will completely guarantee safety but there are many things churches and schools can do to decrease risk and send offenders the right message, “we are doing everything we can to protect our children and will not tolerate abuse!”

Several years after “Jay” participated in sex offender treatment in my clinic, I treated a teacher who’d offended numerous boys in Seventh-day Adventist schools. His crimes were eventually discovered, but only after he’d molested dozens of boys in the North American Division. After he was released from prison, he was referred to sex offender treatment in Oregon and told me he’d purposefully targeted schools he thought were “gullible and naive” and would “fall for my grooming tactics.”

He said he determined which schools were the “easiest targets” during pre-employment interviews and was usually able to see which schools had windows in doors and classrooms that were “more secluded” during tours of the schools. He was such an outstanding teacher and always had plenty of offers. In those days schools didn’t conduct thorough reference checks the way they do now.

What I concluded from working with this particular offender was that background checks, the “two person rule,” windows in classroom doors and rules about appropriate boundaries between students and teachers were all important, but that in-service training about offender behavior was probably more important. Background checks offer minimal protection because, as mentioned in previous articles, only a minority of offenders are ever reported and prosecuted for their crimes.

Training helps everyone understand what’s expected, reinforces the “no tolerance for abuse” message and makes sure everyone is clear about what’s appropriate and what needs to be reported. Reviewing policies also eliminates the possibility for staff to say they “didn’t know the rules” and might “weed out” potential offenders when they realize how serious the church or school is about preventing, detecting, and reporting abuse. Staff members also report that specialized training helps them feel more confident about confronting and reporting inappropriate behavior if they see it. The training also minimizes the potential risk they face as employees.

Once an offender is identified or convicted, another set of policies needs to be in place for those offenders who are given permission to attend church. The way in which churches develop and implement “chaperone agreements,” “participation agreements” or “church safety plans” varies greatly, but always requires cautious and thoughtful decision making about how the information is communicated to the congregation. Each church should develop a comprehensive policy about which offenders (low, medium or high risk) will be allowed to attend which type of services
(Sabbath services vs. adult Bible study classes) and be willing to implement participation/chaperon contracts in a consistent manner.

Serious problems can arise when congregations don’t understand church policies or the laws related to reporting child abuse. Members can mistakenly blame the pastor or leadership for doing the right thing. For this reason, policies should be reviewed with the congregation and everyone should be made aware of them before the church is faced with a crisis. Once it becomes personal and appears to be focused on a particular person, church members can become overly defensive and undermine the process. As one expert said, “it’s better to react with informed compassion than ignorant reaction.”

If offenders are treated differently, or if someone has been accused of a sexual offense but never convicted, the process can be more susceptible to complaints. For example, if one offender is allowed to attend regular services and another is not, the church needs to have a policy that accounts for the difference in the application of the rules. Another type of problem could arise if a member informs the church that they’ve been abused by another member, perhaps an elder or parent, 10 or 20 years earlier, and the accused member denies it. What should the church do then? If the church allows the accused to continue attending without any precautions, the church could be liable for any future crimes related to the accused’s involvement with the church. On the other hand, if the church demands that the accused member abide by a “participation/chaperone” agreement, he/she might become angry and threatening. Most churches believe they don’t have a choice once an allegation has surfaced because of the potential consequences of failing to manage the situation in a responsible and pro-active manner. Fortunately, one of the arguments that can appease the accused member is that the participation/chaperone agreement can also help prevent against false allegations.

With offenders who are willing to abide by a participation/chaperone/safety agreement, the agreement needs to specify who their chaperone will be and which activities they can participate in. Most churches require that the offender’s chaperone not be a relative. Participation agreements must also include rules about the offender’s access to areas frequented by children and special provisions for restroom use. Offenders should also be discouraged from seeking leadership positions and include restrictions about developing relationships with families who have children. Participation agreements should also include language that gives the church administration the right to inform leaders and members on an “as needed basis.” This may require a waiver of confidentiality and some churches have made “full disclosure to all members” a requirement for membership so no one in the church feels as if they were kept in the dark about something that might put their children at risk.

None of the issues related to managing sex offenders and child abuse prevention are comfortable topics and are therefore easily put off, sometimes until it’s too late. If you haven’t already created a child safety committee to study and develop a policy, do it now. Other conferences might be able to share what they have created. Adventist Risk Management has additional resources you will find helpful.
Cory Jewell Jensen, M.S. Co-director, Center for Behavioral Intervention.

For more information about developing effective church policies on child maltreatment, appropriate staff/student boundaries, staff screening or “safety plans for offenders to attend church,” contact Cory Jewell Jensen at

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Cory Jewell Jensen, M.S., is a United Methodist “PK” from Oregon, who has been a long-time friend, trainer, and consultant to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She is the co-director of one of the largest and longest operating sex offender evaluation and treatment programs in Oregon. Jensen 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 North American, including 12 Adventist conferences. Jensen 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.
Recently, a friend sent me a Facebook notice that he had found a funny video of me dancing in high school. I was mortified that such a video existed and that it soon would be disseminated to my friends and family via social media. What I tried to pass off as “dancing” in order to be part of the cool crowd in high school probably would seem funny to anyone who viewed it. Years have passed since those high school antics and today as a church employee my former actions were something that I didn’t want being circulated.

I stared at my computer screen for a few minutes trying to decide whether I should click on the link to view the offending video or not. As the moments passed I became increasingly suspicious. Although the video camera had been invented before I reached high school age, not many kids carried them around in the mid-1980’s. My next thought was that I wasn’t really good friends with the social network “friend” who sent me the video link.

So who sent the video link?

Spammers.

Spam is nothing new. The explosive growth and popularity of social media has made spammers’ work much easier. They now have access to social media tools that allow their attacks to focus on specific demographics. The use of email to send unsolicited messages with links to pages on
the Internet trying to sell something - often used to market pornography–has been around for years.

A spammer can turn a personal or professional account into an accomplice by sending messages, notifications, and even tweets to unsuspecting victims. The damage that malicious spam can cause to your computer or worse, your personal or professional reputation can be costly.

According to the blog Socialnomics, Facebook alone is approaching 1 billion users. Facebook and Twitter combined have 95% of the estimated 1.7 billion social network users in the world. Social networks are a wonderful method of communication allowing us to easily stay in touch with friends and family. The use and importance of social media as marketing tools is increasing rapidly, too. But how can social media networks be used safely?

When many organizations use social media to market themselves or their ministry in the workplace, preventing staff from using social networks is no longer realistic. Establishing some simple commonsense tips and informing your staff of these can save a lot of grief and help combat social media spam:

- Make sure your browser and other security software is up-to-date.
- Change your password regularly and use a strong password that includes numbers, symbols, and upper and lowercase letters.
- If you don’t recognize a sender or a message or post looks suspicious use the reporting tools most services have available. Most spam comes from fraudulent accounts and notifying the service will allow them to investigate and shutdown the offending party.
- If you have a company social network account conduct a search on yourself. There are many fraudulent accounts setup with the same or similar names. You can also report these to your service and they will shut the fraudulent accounts down.
- Be very careful of who you follow or “friend” on social networks. Some industry experts estimate that as many as 40% of user accounts are fraudulent. Check the profile of any user requesting you to follow them on Twitter or “friend” them on Facebook to make sure it is someone you trust. If in doubt do not accept the request.

Social networks are not going anywhere anytime soon. All indications are that their prominence in our lives and businesses will only increase. A little common sense and vigilance will help ensure that your online experience is positive and productive.

Remember, if you receive a message, notification, or tweet that seems suspicious, report it or ignore it—that’s what I did. And yes, thankfully, there should never be a video of my funny dancing anywhere on the Internet.
Julio C. Muñoz, Marketing Specialist, Adventist Risk Management
Young or old, none of us are invincible. I know. As I type this article, I do it with only half of an index finger on my left hand. Flashback to 1973 and a small car dealership in California’s high desert where I was employed as a mechanic. I was trying to find the cause of a simple squeak in a brand new Chevy pickup. I knew better than to get so close to moving belts and pulleys with a rag in my hand. Maybe I was tired. Obviously I wasn’t paying attention. No matter what, in the end the final score was truck 1, John 0.

Employee safety requires a number of commitments on the part of many, including the organization, supervisors, and employees. Employers must provide training that meets federal, provincial, state or other governmental standards. The employer must ensure that the employee has the proper personal protective equipment (PPE), such as safety glasses or goggles, hearing protection, etc., for each job. “Hands on” training, such as how to operate a particular piece of equipment, observation of driving skills, and others may also be needed in some lines of work. Periodic retraining may be necessary for some tasks, either by law, or as a precaution to ensure safety remains a top priority.

At the same time, we, as employees, must also do our part. We need to be committed to working safely. When a task requires safety equipment, we need to use it. If a machine requires a safety guard, it needs to be in place. If we have questions related to the safety of a task, we must go to a supervisor and find the answer before continuing.
Some of the greatest challenges to maintaining a safe work environment come with two mindsets that may exist. Both require attention. And both can result in an employee taking dangerous and sometimes catastrophic shortcuts.

Younger employees sometimes live in a world of invincibility. Accidents don’t happen to them. With that frame of mind, they may tend to take more risks on the job. They have also not been in the workforce long enough to fully recognize the hazards that exist: physical, chemical, biological, etc. They may also expect that the employer has protected them.

On another level, there are some employees who have been around awhile and work with a different mindset. They may pick up a drill and start drilling without safety glasses or run saws without guards. They sometimes say, “I’ve been doing it this way for 30 years and never had an accident.” They may have been taught and actually know better, but feel guards get in their way or use some other excuse, rather than do it right.

Following an accident, an employer may find that even though the employee was properly trained and provided PPE, the employee was not in compliance with safety standards and not wearing the equipment provided. Periodic observations of employees at work can help identify a potential for accidents before they happen. The identification of “near miss” accidents that could have been tragic, but resulted in no property damage or injury, can also help employers prevent future employee accidents.

The following short list includes some of the actions an employer can do to prevent accidents:

1. Determine what training and PPE is needed for the tasks each employee will be responsible for within their job description.
2. Provide training to employees.
3. Provide all necessary PPE and require its use.
4. Provide any necessary “hands-on” training.
5. Ensure all machines and equipment are properly guarded. (If there are “pinch or nip points” they need to be guarded in a way that employees cannot come in contact with them.)
6. Periodically observe employees on the job to ensure they are working safely and following safety standards and the organization’s rules.
7. Provide periodic retraining as required by the type of task and where observations and/or accidents indicate a need for retraining.
8. Require employees to report both actual and “near miss” accidents.
9. Investigate all accidents, including “near miss” and establish measures that will prevent similar occurrences.
10. Provide a means for employees to make suggestions or report hazards. (This can be through “open door” policies, suggestion boxes and combinations of both.)

While we are not all employers, we are all employees. Think about what you can do to prevent injuries to yourself or others. Some of it may begin with attitude changes. On the other hand, maybe you are generally safety conscious, but still take the occasional shortcut to save time, or
for some other reason. Maybe your focus drifts. Mine certainly did, with less than satisfying results.

We must all stay committed to safety. Develop rules. Follow rules. Provide personal protective equipment. Wear protective equipment. Insist employees work safely. Focus on the safest way to complete tasks. We each have a role, and we must each do our part to maintain a safe workplace. Accidents can happen to anyone.

John Dougan, ARM, ALCM, Adventist Risk Management senior risk control
Kolkata is one of the four mega-cities in India, having a population of about 14.5 million people. In the wee hours of Friday, December 9, 2011, the city experienced one of the deadliest fire tragedies in its history at AMRI hospital, a very modern facility with state-of-the-art equipment.

In spite of all the technology available today, the fire claimed more than 93 lives and many more were injured. Most of the 160 patients who were admitted to the hospital during this time were in the ICU, and died of asphyxiation, some while in their sleep. Others were burned to death while struggling to get out.

According to the fire brigade officers, it is reported that the fire broke out around 3:30 a.m. in the hospital’s basement. This area was originally constructed as a parking garage but was being used as storage area. The storage was full of combustible items, which acted as a catalyst to spread the flames quickly. When local residents and neighbors noticed the flames, they rushed to the hospital to rescue the patients, but were chased away from the scene by the guards, who stated it was a kitchen fire and they would take care of it. Although the flames were intense it was the black smoke that engulfed the five floors of the centrally air-conditioned building that caused the asphyxiation and death of the victims.
Since the location of the hospital was in a congested area of the city, it became difficult for the fire brigade to exercise normal fire fighting procedures. Narrow and winding lanes created an obstruction for rescue operations. Firemen had a very hard time entering the smoke-filled rooms. Fixed-pane windows also hindered access, and many windows had to be broken in order to gain entry to higher floors. The rescue team pressed into service pulleys from the upper floors and used other rudimentary methods to rescue some of the unconscious and dazed patients who had been affected by the smoke. It was not possible to bring the victims down ladders, as they were not in a physical condition to undergo this type of transport. About 250 firemen and 25 fire engines battled for nearly seven hours before the fire could be controlled.

Reports indicated that the staff was not trained to handle an emergency of this nature, and the hospital did not have enough firefighting equipment. This situation of an unprepared institution led to the tragic death of more than 93 individuals. What lessons can be learned from this tragedy and others that have been reported?

1. All institutions should have an emergency evacuation plan, drawn, posted, practiced and documented on a regular basis.

2. All the employees of the institution should be given a thorough orientation of the evacuation routes.

3. Plans should be in place to evacuate the elderly and those in wheelchairs.

4. All exits are to be clearly marked and lighted.

5. All exit doors in a building should have panic hardware installed.

6. Corridors and verandas should be free from any storage or furniture, which can hinder evacuation, or become a tripping hazard during evacuation.

7. Appropriate types of fire extinguishers need to be installed as per local government codes, and checked at regular intervals, and employees should undergo training in the use of such equipment.

8. All storage should be in a storage room with items arranged in a neat and orderly manner. Storage should generally be on steel shelves, which are anchored to the floor and wall. Heavy items are to be placed on the floor and lower levels, and lighter objects at higher levels.

9. Flammables, paints, and other combustible items need to be stored in a separate area, preferably away from the main storage area.

10. Doors for the boiler rooms should be fire rated and self-closing.

11. Buildings should be constructed with smoke separation between floors.
12. Air conditioning and other air-handling equipment should be configured to automatically shut down in the event of a fire.

13. Smoke detection and alarm systems must be in place and operating properly to provide early warning.

When proper safety features and procedures are in place personnel, patients, visitors, students, and property experience a greater amount of safety in case of a fire or any other calamity.

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Gideon Dayak, risk control consultant, Adventist Risk Management
I really like getting to know people better. Someone who does what I consider a boring job may, in fact, be passionate about his or her work. Personally, I hate numbers and I believe they hate me back. After recently working on a project that involved some accounting reconciliation, I realized something wonderful. God has created some people that enjoy working with numbers so I don’t have to!
When I spoke with Jermaine Jackson about writing this feature, I asked him if he were to be described as a superhero, which one would he choose to be? It was interesting to hear that he compared himself to Superman. I was surprised! An accountant who feels like superman? He went on to explain that he feels it is probably more the Clark Kent side of Superman, because no one knows that Clark and Superman are really the same people. A part of Jermaine’s work includes helping people with problems and situations that they cannot solve. He executes and oversees the overall day-to-day accounting functions of Adventist Risk Management (ARM).

Jermaine recently won an “Employee of the Year” award at ARM. He received this award because of his willingness to use his education and spiritual gifts to further the work of church. He takes his goals seriously and is passionate to do extraordinary work.

Work is not the only way Jermaine fills his days. Cooking and beating anyone in Spades (sounds like a challenge to me!), are things he enjoys doing in his spare time. For this “superhero,” relaxing near the water is how he likes to recharge his batteries followed by a good meal such as spaghetti or a delicious Caribbean dish. Jermaine is a fun-loving, easygoing type of person who thinks that September babies make the world complete (Jermaine was born in September). For sports, he roots for anything St. Louis, because it is in his blood.

When asked to choose a favorite person, Jermaine named both God and his beautiful wife D’Andria. If he could have a day with special powers his one and only power would be to change the attitude of mankind so everyone would be able to live in peace and harmony.