As surely as the sun rises and sets and the earth once again completes its yearly cycle, we are approaching in the words of Nat King Cole’s memorable song, the “Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer”.

It is a time of baseball, picnics, and summer camp. What child has not looked forward to summer camp and experienced some of their fondest memories while there?

Unfortunately, there is another side the wonderful memories of friendships made, honors earned, and skills learned. Far too many accidents happen, injuries result,
and lives are lost.

It is in the spirit of enhancing the experience while reducing the risks that this article is written.

...Continue Reading for Safety Guidelines

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:
Transportation adds risk to any activity. Understanding those risks and implementing some simple guidelines can help you minimize your risks and keep your people and property safe.

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The first step is to build trust and confidence among the attendees by meeting the standards of the accrediting associations. Most Adventist camps across North America are certifying their programs through the guidelines, procedures, and practices prescribed by the American Camp Association. Certification in this program provides a degree of confidence to our members of the importance we place in protecting our most valuable resource, our children. While this is a good first step, it is not the only step that needs to be taken to broaden the experience and reduce the risk.

In an effort to build a tradition of safety at your camp, Adventist Risk Management (ARM) is seeking a partnership with your local conference and camp leadership. ARM recommends the implementation of a well-constructed, fully implemented safety program. This plan should provide answers to the concerns that many parents have in placing their child under your care, custody, and control. Here are a few of the questions that a parent might ask.

**Counselors**

**How are counselors chosen?** Especially at overnight camps, it’s worth remembering that counselors function as your surrogate 24/7. Inquire about the camp’s screening process: Does it conduct criminal background checks on prospective employees? Does it require that new
counselors have experience teaching or working with children? Does it investigate employees' prior work history?

Training

How is the staff trained in terms of safety? Are they trained In person or by phone? How many hours of training is completed? Are there safety and first-aid tests counselors need to pass? How many of the counselors are certified by the Red Cross in first aid and CPR?

Accidents

Have there ever been serious injuries or deaths at the camp? How did the camp respond to the event? Accidents can happen anywhere, but learning about past incidents can tell much about how the camp responds to serious incidents and how it takes steps to prevent future hazards.

Trips & Excursions

Does the camp do off-site excursions, and, if so, what’s the safety protocol? Good requirements may include: at least one trip leader who is qualified to respond to emergencies (or "RTE," a specialized Red Cross certification), trip leaders should be of a minimum age, a buddy system is implemented, an emergency plan is established in case of a camper getting lost, and use of cell phones or walkie-talkies is the standard form of communication.

Emergencies

Does the camp have an emergency plan? The plan should cover everything from earthquakes, hurricanes, tornado, severe thunder storms and forest fires to hostage situations, dangerous wildlife, and verbalized threats. It should also cover health mishaps like food poisoning or water contamination, child abuse, disease outbreaks, and staff deaths.

Accreditation

Is the camp accredited by the American Camp Association? No bureaucratic process can insure safety. A camp that has gone the extra mile to receive accreditation has probably thought through a lot of worst-case scenarios. The ACA standards include safety, health, program and camp operations. For more information about researching a camp’s safety, visit the ACA website http://www.acacamps.org/.

How comfortable are you with answering these questions. If in doubt I invite you to contact your local ARM representative. Let them work with you to implement a safety program. You can also contact ARM through our website www.adventistrisk.org. There is a wealth of information available on loss prevention and risk control.

It should the goal of every camp to provide an experience that is better than the year before. In the quest for an excellent experience, don’t ever forget that the experience will only be as good
as the efforts made to maintain excellence in the protection of those who are entrusted to our
care, custody and control. Have a great year and be safe!

By Dave Rawson,
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