

risk reporter

for camps and conference centers

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Managing Your Risks

Critical issue—security

Earlier this year, members of Church Mutual's Group Sales Department met with key personnel of Christian Camp and Conference Association to discuss a variety of topics, including claims activity at CCCA locations and potential risk control techniques to implement.

A critical issue for CCCA executives and camp directors is how to prepare for a life-threatening situation at a camp. Obviously, this is an extremely serious question with no easy, one-size-fits-all answer.

There is no one organization to provide the expertise needed for this issue, so we created the source ourselves. Through contacts with various risk management trade associations and other resources, we put together a panel to discuss the issues, challenges and potential solutions to a life-threatening situation occurring at a camp. You will find the biographies of the members of our panel on Page 4.

With the panel in place, we scheduled a conference call and invited CCCA executives and all camp directors to listen in. We allowed those directors to e-mail questions into the panel during the discussion. The outcome was a 60-minute discussion packed full of useful information covering the wide spectrum of security at camps.

The key messages fill the pages of this newsletter.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the articles, please call or e-mail me. My contact information can be found on the back page.

Richard J. Schaber, CPCU
Risk Control Manager

Camps face unique security issues

Remote control is an oxymoron when it comes to camp safety.

Because many of the nation's camps are set in out-of-the-way places, security can be a tremendous challenge.

"Camps are generally in large, open-space areas," Church Mutual Risk Control Manager Rick Schaber pointed out.

Other challenges?

- They are often surrounded by woods.
- There's not fencing or gates around most of them, so there's uncontrolled access.
- They're in rural areas, which means they have a slow response time from emergency personnel that could be anywhere from 20 to 40 minutes.
- Their activities are spread out across their entire property, which could be 100-plus acres.
- Campers' ages vary widely.
- There's a new group of campers every week.
- There is a high turnover of counselors.

"There's obviously a recognition for security at camps, both secular and Christian," said Dan Houston, director of security and safety at Legacy Church in Albuquerque, N.M. "The thing that bothers me the most really is the remote aspect and the response time of law enforcement to the location."

"When you've got property that is so massive in size, it's very difficult to get your hands around everything that's happening at every moment," said Christine Hoppe, director of risk management, security and incident response for Aurora Public Schools in Colorado. "You really need to ensure that your staff has solid plans in place in regards to how they are going to respond if and when that first shot is fired. And they are going to have to fend for themselves for a while, just based on where they are, how far out they are and how far away the police department may be. So I think this really centers on the fact that preparedness and drilling for that staff and probably the kids as well is essential."

"You have to use prudent decision making on how you train campers based on their age," said Randy Spivey, executive director of the Safe Travel Institute in Spokane, Wash. "The kind of program you would train K-12 might be a little bit different. It is important that everybody knows what their options are and are

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(security)

trained to a similar level, because research shows very clearly that the responsibilities or the responsibility of somebody who has been trained or untrained for a crisis situation and how they respond are dramatically different."

Training is crucial

"You can do quality training in an hour or two," Spivey said. "You can certainly bring everyone to a baseline standard of understanding of what your threats are. You can use videos, tabletop drills and actually practice it a little bit. It doesn't have to be a two-day program for a seven-day camp, but it's certainly worth taking the couple of hours' investment."

And repeat it for the camp director and counselors.

"If you could do it once a month, it would be easier for them to do what they're supposed to do," Hoppe said, "because they understand the methodology. So I think you'd be better served to do an hour program but three or four times over the course of the summer."

What about the campers?

"On the first day of camp, give them some type of baseline knowledge," Hoppe said. "Verbiage is always paramount—a bad situation in this camp where someone wants to hurt you, and this is how we're going to duck and cover. This is how we run away."

The most important training lesson is keep your options open.

"Don't give somebody a checklist as far as here is the No. 1 option, here is the No. 2 option," Spivey warned. "If you told them absolutely in all cases shelter in place or lockdown, that would obviously be the wrong set of guidelines if you find yourself where the shooter is."

"There is no one solid answer," Hoppe agreed. "Because every situation is, in fact, different."

Attempt to limit access

It all starts at the camp's front gate.

"We talk about how remote some of these locations are," Hoppe said. "I would suspect that they all have some type of primary access road. Would there be a way to monitor who is on and not on that road? Could you gate it?"

"You could put personnel out there and maybe one or two surveillance cameras," she said. "You could have someone in your main office monitoring them."

Also, try to get a handle on controlling that access.

"I would make sure there's a real solid sign-in and sign-out and know who has the authority to do that," Spivey said. "You could have a parental custody dispute where one parent drops off the camper and then another one wants to come in and take them away."

Being able to identify camp personnel quickly and easily is also a good way to recognize outsiders. Putting counselors in colored T-shirts is one method.

"That strategy could be carried over to the campers themselves," Hoppe said.

"Rather than put them in a uniform, break them up into groups," she said. "Certain kids wear red bandannas and certain others have yellow. That is a way to visually recognize who is supposed to be there and who is not."

Don't lose sight of the fact the campers themselves could be the problem.

"We have a lot of trouble with kids right now," Houston pointed out. "So I'm not so sure you want to limit your thinking to just someone who might come into the camp who shouldn't be there. I think you need to be inclusive of people who are supposed to be there but may come there with problems."

"Part of that is training your people to listen and be aware," he continued. "Informal communication and people coming and saying that kids have a problem—I think you need to pay attention to that kind of thing."

On-site security

The first step is making contact with local officials to allow them to become familiar with your facility.

"I can't say enough how important it is for you to establish a relationship with your local law enforcement agency, fire department and rescue people," Houston said, "regardless if it's a city police department, sheriff's department or state police. I encourage you to make absolutely sure they know your camp is going on and how many people you have out there."

"I would even encourage you to invite them out to lunch," he continued. "Most of your law enforcement agencies care about kids. They want to see them safe."

Hoppe agreed.

"We encourage them to participate in our drills," she pointed out. "It's wonderful to know them, and it's even better when they know what you're doing inside that camp when something goes wrong."

Armed security option

While this seems to fly in the face of the image of children frolicking on the beach near the lake, it has become a consideration for some camps.

"If at all possible, off-duty law enforcement would be my first choice," Houston said.

"When you put someone with a gun in an environment with kids, you want to make sure that person is completely trained," Hoppe said. "That's hard to do when you're running something for just the summer."

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A Perspective

We're smack dab in the middle of the electronics age, so it's only natural to assume that technology is your friend when dealing with life-threatening incidents.

With that in mind, Risk Reporter spoke with Christine Hoppe, director of risk management, security and incident response for Aurora Public Schools in Colorado.

Her 60 locations have 4,000 employees and 30,000 students.



Risk Reporter: Most of us grew up in schools that used a public address system to communicate with students. Is this a viable method for camps during a situation?

Hoppe: This may help because, in a situation, the response is going to be confusion and chaos. Although that may cause some panic, it will also provide clarity, and people will understand the situation. I think it's better that they understand and know there is an expected response from them than to be confused, not know what to do and what's going on.

Risk Reporter: Should you use a horn or similar warning device when an incident occurs?

Hoppe: Your best response is a very clear, distinct, verbal message, so there is no confusion. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the person in charge getting on a blow horn and saying, "We've got a shooter situation going on right now." If you go to horns, bells, signals or signs, no one is going to know. The parent who drives up to drop off their child is going to have no clue what that could be. It could be a tornado warning. If you can do some type of verbal direction, I think you can save lives.

Risk Reporter: Are coded messages the best way to alert your campers that an incident is taking place? For example, "Mr. Simpson, you're needed at the front office."

Hoppe: Absolutely not. You've got parents there who have no clue who Mr. Simpson is. Is he a parent. Is he a guest? Is he with the church? You've got to be clear and distinct. There is a shooter situation going on. We need you to . . . That way, there is no confusion.

Risk Reporter: Many camps use radios as a communication device. How would these best be utilized if a situation occurs?

Hoppe: They can help you determine where your kids and staff are. You could do a call-in and say, "I'm Joe Brown. I've got kids A through Z with me. Everyone is present and accounted for. No one's hurt." That would also help you after the event is over to try and understand what you've got on your hands.

Risk Reporter: Would it be safe to say that you would recommend that every counselor or group leader be equipped with a radio?

Hoppe: I think in this day and age, if you don't, you are going to have a lot of questions to answer. I send my teachers out with a radio, so when they're out in the field with my kids, I've got a method of communicating with them. We use two-way radios, and I think they are about \$300 apiece. So you're not talking a huge, huge investment.

Risk Reporter: Cell phones have become prevalent in our society. Are they another alternative during an incident?

Hoppe: You need to plan that your cell lines are going to be jammed, and you will not be able to use your cell phone as a method of communication. So you're back to your two-way radios, your land lines and your text messaging.

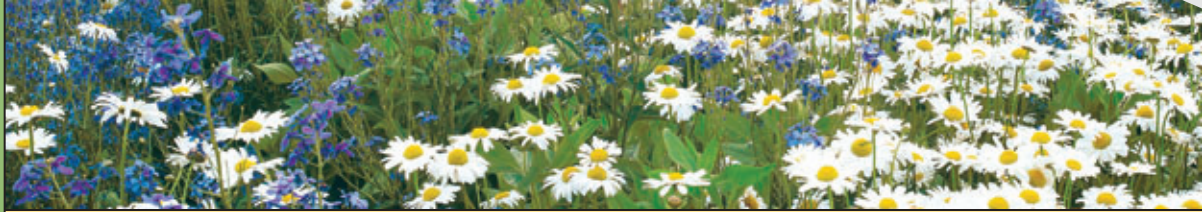
My superintendent was in the Pentagon when it was hit on 9/11, and the reason we all carry Blackberries is when the cell phone lines went down, you could still text message.

Panel of experts

Randy Spivey - executive director of the Safe Travel Institute in Spokane, Wash. He is considered to be a leading expert in the field of travel risk reduction and abduction prevention/survival. Spivey served as the chief of the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency, Policy and Oversight Division from 1997 to 2002. In that role, he managed all hostage survival training programs in the Department of Defense, personally training more than 8,000 individuals.

Christine Hoppe - director of risk management, security and incident response for Aurora Public Schools in Colorado. Hoppe works closely with local law enforcement, fire departments and the office of emergency management on an extensive incident response program.

Dan Houston - director of security and safety at Legacy Church in Albuquerque, N.M. Houston supervises 21 security people. He has more than 25 years of experience as a law enforcement officer, spending 21 years with the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department and almost five years as a chief of police in Florida. He continues to serve part time with the Albuquerque Police Department. Legacy Church has a 14,000-member congregation and a 240-student school.



seasonal spotlight

Life-or-death decision is worst nightmare

The worst-case scenario at camps used to be running out of marshmallows or chocolate for s'mores.

In the more dangerous environment of the 21st century, camp directors are most concerned with an armed intruder, poised to wreak havoc.

"Because of the evil that's in our world today, there are no boundaries," said Dan Houston, director of security and safety at Legacy Church in Albuquerque, N.M. "It has no limitations, and so we have to take reasonable steps to at least make sure people are safe."

In simple terms, how your camp responds can be a life-or-death decision.

Church Mutual Risk Control Manager Rick Schaber presented that frightening scenario to a panel of three of the nation's leading security experts recently.

"Let's say a shot has been fired, and everybody is spread out," Schaber said, "meaning that activities are taking place during this portion of the day. What are the responses that a counselor should be taking along with the campers?"

Executive Director Randy Spivey of the Safe Travel Institute in Spokane, Wash., got down to basics.

"The best way to not engage or not be in harm's way is to be away from wherever the shooting is taking place," he began. "If you're in the vicinity of where that shot is, you want to get away. You want to get out of there."

"Based on where the threat is coming from should drive your response," said Director of

Risk Management, Security and Incident Response Christine Hoppe of Aurora Public Schools in Colorado. "It boils down to two different types of responses—one is that you're going to duck, cover and try to hide yourself. The second one is that you're going to run like crazy to try to get out of the way."

"Counselors and people should make the decision to get away or to lock themselves in or get into an area that may be safe," Spivey added. "Always try and pick a place that has a back door and that has a way out. So if the perpetrator comes into that area, you have not put yourself in a situation where you have no escape."

Because of remote locations, law enforcement is not an immediate option for this situation.

"In most scenarios where you have an active shooter situation, they are over in five to 10 minutes," Spivey pointed out. "So the idea of waiting on law enforcement to respond is probably not going to be a practical safety net."

There's a high likelihood that the camp's staff will have to be prepared to provide the appropriate response.

If escape is out of the question and the campers are in immediate danger, there may only be one alternative.

"This is a scenario that is a little more difficult to talk about," Spivey continued. "That is the idea of possibly taking out through intervention—whether it's the law enforcement, camp counselors, staff faculty—but having direct intervention with the armed intruder."