

Risk Reporter

for Camps and Conference Centers

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Can you spot the three safety hazards in this photo?
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Risk Reporter discusses paintball safety with David Maynard of Pleasant Vineyard Ministries.

Maintenance shops value, risk to camps

The maintenance shop can be the lifeblood of a camp. Keep things running smoothly and campers and directors will be all smiles.

Off limits to campers

Aaron Turner is the maintenance director at YMCA Camp Coniston in Grantham, N.H., which built a new \$250,000 facility seven years ago.

"I haven't seen a camp maintenance shed that is in a league of ours," he said. "It is an enormous shell, with workshop space in the middle, a mechanical bay and an incredible amount of unheated storage space to keep all of our equipment out of the elements."

Steve Michaelis is residential facility manager at Fairview Lake YMCA Camps and Conference Center in Newton, N.J. His facilities consist of a 50-year-old maintenance shed and 100-year-old storage barn.

Though their scenarios seem to be at opposite ends of the spectrum, there is one striking similarity.

"The main thing we took into consideration was getting the facility out of the middle of the camp into a place where kids had limited access to it," Turner said. "Also, it was out of the sight of the parents. It gave our guys a place to work where they could have all of their tools and be able to utilize them."

"Our maintenance building is outside of the main part of the camp," Michaelis said. "So it's fairly secure. It's all off limits, which is widely publicized throughout the year. We keep it locked at all times. We have a separate garage across the street where we keep all of our power equipment."

Employees' backgrounds vary

The makeup of camp maintenance departments can run the gamut from young people with construction backgrounds to retired handymen.

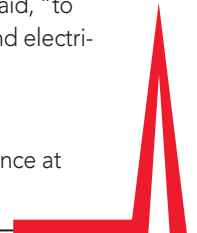
"I like to think that we hired our own contracting crew," Turner said. "That's the way I look at it."

"We go through a bit of a test when we're hiring," Michaelis said, "to see where their skill level is. It's not formal—basic plumbing and electrical knowledge, like diagnostic evaluation of a circuit."

Training is essential

"We send our four people to the annual maintenance conference at

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(maintenance)

Lake George," Turner said. "We have also hired an industrial safety graduate, who will be doing an audit and possibly rolling out a model for camp safety standards."

"Our five full-timers and two part-timers are all trained and have signed off on lawn equipment," Michaelis said.

"They've read the instructions and the safety precautions with them. We make sure they understand what the safety expectations are and then provide them with the information, knowledge and equipment they need to do it safely.

"We make sure they don't do something they're not capable of," he continued. "They have the ability to come to me and say they're not comfortable with something, and that's fine. If it's something beyond their scope, we don't want them attempting it."

Storage space is always limited

How often do you hear someone complain that they've got too much room? That's virtually an oxymoron.

"In winter, when we do slow down a little bit, we'll take a day or two and go through the shop and reorganize it," Michaelis said. "Anything we haven't used in awhile we'll evaluate and see if we actually need to have it anymore. The closest town is 20 minutes away, so we have to stock a fairly large amount of stuff here."

It's common for maintenance buildings to have mezzanines. Pay attention to proper guardrails in these elevated spaces as well as the stairways or ladders used to access them.

Many camps also have aboveground fuel tanks that require special care. The biggest risk in this area is a vehicle hitting the tanks. Proper barricades are a must.

"A big risk management safety concern too is the amount of propane gas we have," Michaelis said. "We don't have natural gas, so we pretty much heat our water and buildings with propane. We make sure everybody is on board with that."

Power tools

Obviously, power tools immediately come to mind when talking about maintenance safety issues.

Michaelis is acutely aware of it, as he has one of his people sidelined with a workers' compensation injury.

"It was a nail gun incident," he said. "He was framing a little shed, and he was familiar with the equipment—he's used it many times. Accidents do happen."

"We have a portable sawmill," Turner said, "where we can take a tree, custom cut it and joint it—so we can completely mill this tree into the finished product if we want. Obviously, we don't do that for lumber that we use in the camp construction. But we do use it to add a lot of different charms, if you will. Large slabs we use for countertops and benches."

Chain saws invoke gruesome thoughts of horror movies past.

"I require them to wear a helmet with the visor and ear protection," Michaelis added. "We have chaps in the shop they can throw on and go. Footwear is a little harder because that they provide for themselves, so you can't force the issue too much."

Keep guards in place

Safety guards have become standard on dangerous equipment.

"I'm almost a freak about maintaining originality," Michaelis admitted, "making sure that stuff isn't jerry-rigged and that all the proper guards are in place on saws and mowing equipment.

"There's hundreds of kids here today," he continued. "We go out and mow, and all I need is pick up one rock that gets hurled—we make sure the grass deflectors are down, and we have a policy for weed-whacking that we don't do it around vehicles, or if some group of kids goes by, we shut them down."

Maintenance Safety Checklist

	Satisfactory	Needs Attention
Are portable electrical tools and equipment grounded or of the double-insulated type?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are any electrical cords frayed, cracked or dried out?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are properly grounded receptacles placed where machinery or tools are used?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do extension cords being used have a grounding conductor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are power strips or bar-type adapters used to increase the number of receptacles in a wall outlet?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are ladders maintained and in good condition at all times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are metal ladders prohibited from use in areas containing electrical current?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are ladders equipped with nonslip safety feet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are saws and other woodworking equipment provided with blade guards and safety devices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are workers required to wear eye and hearing protection?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do users of power tools and other equipment receive annual training for proper and safe operating procedures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are operators of chain saws required to wear helmets, face shields, hearing protection and chaps?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Hazards:

1. No table saw blade guard
2. No ear protection
3. No table saw push stick



Managing Your Risks

Tracking and trending

Although you do your best to create a safe environment at your camps and conference centers, accidents will occur and injuries will be sustained. However, many injuries are caused by recurring incidents that were just never viewed as problematic. I refer to any noninjury-causing incident as a near miss.

For example, a tree root that crosses one of your main trails. Staff members and campers have had numerous near misses because of it, but nothing more than a couple of small cuts were sustained. Then someone falls hard, and medical attention is needed.

To benefit from near misses, your facility must have a policy to report all injuries, regardless of how insignificant they seem. If a first-aid kit is used, there should be a report filed. If an ice pack is needed, a report should be filed.

The reports don't have to be long but need to include the key details about the incident and injury. Some of the necessary information includes:

- Name of injured
- Camper or staff
- Cause
- Type of injury
- Location of incident
- Treatment provided
- Summary of incident
- Activity
- Date and time of incident

The reports should then be entered in a spreadsheet program, such as Excel, so the information can easily be reviewed for any trends. It's best to limit the number of types of injuries and causes so you can identify trends. If you have too many types of injuries, such as cut on finger, cut on foot or cut on leg, you will never see a trend. The type of injury in all three of these examples should be cut.

Once you start tracking injuries and analyzing the data, it will be easy to spot the problem areas. Trends can be in any category, such as location, activity, cause, type of injury and time of incident, so it's important to review all of the data.

Once you've identified the problem, you need to take the next step—implementing a control strategy to eliminate, or at least reduce, the problem.

Richard J. Schaber, CPCU, CRM
Risk Control Manager

Seasonal Spotlight

Caution is watchword in camp kitchens

There's plenty of food for thought when it comes to operating a camp kitchen.

And not all of it is mindlessly ladled onto the plates of hungry boys and girls.

Planning has become more essential than ever in these days of foodborne illnesses, sensitivities and allergies.

Toss in the challenge that most camps are fluid environments, with participants turning over from week to week, and you've got a sizeable challenge.

Perhaps no one is more aware of the situation than Viki Kappel Spain, M.Ed., who is the author of several camp food service books and manuals.

"A successful camp operation is one that is proactive with potentially serious camper issues," she said, "such as anaphylactic shock or something as simple as lactose intolerance."

The first proactive measure to take?

"Communication between health care providers and the food service director," Kappel Spain replies. "If a list of sensitivities, allergies and dietary needs (vegetarian, vegan, wheat/gluten, diabetes, etc.) can be generated and provided to the food service staff prior to or upon arrival of new campers, a host of problems can be virtually eliminated or at least more easily dealt with."

Foodborne illness should be at the forefront of a food service manager's mind.

"Because of the sheer number of campers who flow through the facilities in a summer, the potential for foodborne illness is quite high," Kappel Spain observed.

Hand washing is essential—not only for the full-time kitchen staff but those boys and girls who are involved in serving food to their fellow campers.

"For those camps that serve family style, food safety is tied inexorably to the hands," Kappel Spain said. "What image comes to mind when picturing camper hands? Not exactly the epitome of cleanliness. The added safety barrier can be used in the form of disposable gloves."

There are also potential pitfalls in the kitchen itself.

"Not enough time is dedicated in camp training programs to proper handling and management of kitchen equipment," Kappel Spain added. "The major areas of safety should focus on knife handling, fire/heat/burns and dealing with heavy containers or dangerous objects."

"Prior to campers arriving, kitchen staff safety training should encompass a wide variety of issues for a minimum of 8-16 hours."

Q | A

A Perspective

David Maynard is president of Pleasant Vineyard Ministries (PVM) in Camden, Ohio. Their Christian Paintball Academy camp was the first in the United States to offer paintball as a program. PVM is now taking its 20-plus years of paintball experience and teaching other camps how to run a safe and effective paintball program through its Paintball Symposium. This four-day workshop teaches camps how to start a program from the ground up or take their existing paintball program to the next level.



- **For more information**, contact Maynard at david@pvmcamp.com.

Risk Reporter: What type of training do you recommend before people take to the paintball course for the first time?

Maynard: Training is more important for those who are overseeing the sport than for those who are actually playing the game. Each paintball field must have a set of safety standards in place that are clearly posted and explained to both experienced and inexperienced players prior to game play. The field referees play a vital role in enforcing each of these standards before, during and after each game for safety and fair play. We recommend a ratio of one trained referee for every 10 players with at least one referee in the staging area.

Risk Reporter: Rank paintball with other sports in terms of the inherent dangers.

Maynard: The rate of injury to paintball participants has been estimated at 4.5 injuries per 10,000 participants per year. In a Sports Injury Report, it is even considered safer than bowling. Most accidents are twisted ankles or being shot at a close range, which may leave a welt.

Risk Reporter: What are some of the standards you follow to ensure safety?

Maynard: There are three main ones that must be in place during each event—all paintball guns must be set up using a chronograph, all guns must have a barrel bag on in the safe zone and no player must ever remove their mask during a game. Paintball guns should be set with a chronograph to shoot no more than 280 feet per second and shoot less than 13 balls per second. We chronograph our paintball guns in the morning and in the afternoon prior to game play. CO2 can fluctuate during the day as the air temperature rises, which can cause the gun to shoot at a higher velocity. Air cylinders are much more stable but still need to be chronographed each day. We recommend that each camp have at least one bench chronograph with one or two hand-held chronographs for the refs on the field. Eye injuries are the greatest concern. Most paintball accidents happen off the field in the safe area and are typically due to someone not putting a barrel bag on their gun when coming off of the field. Our referees strictly enforce our mask-on policy, and players are ejected from the game if they remove their mask and from the field if removed more than once.

Risk Reporter: Is paintball a sport for everyone, or should there be age restrictions?

Maynard: Our paintball programs start for those who have completed Grade 6 or are 12 years of age. We have had children as young as 9 play, but we require that one of their parents play with them at all times.

Risk Reporter: What are some of the things to remember regarding paintball supplies when they are not being used?

Maynard: All paintball equipment, such as markers, masks, CO2 and air fill stations, and CO2 cylinders should be stored in a locked facility. All paintballs need to be stored in a climate-controlled room in sealed bags. We also enforce a field-paint-only rule at our camp. Not all paintballs are the same, and some can hurt more than others, depending how they have been stored, how old they are and what manufacture brand they are. The paintballs that typically hurt the most are the ones that don't break.