

the front office

Observe, document, respond, follow up

With apologies to those of you who work in areas of the country where your patrons rarely are stuck indoors because of Mother Nature, where the heck is Ms. Spring? The rest of America awaits you.

With little more than a week left in April as I write, most of the country either has had not enough rain or too much. And readers from here in Illinois haven't put away their gloves and stocking caps yet, save for a few days in mid-month when the temps skyrocketed to all-time highs.

Of course low-humidity, sunshine-filled warm days will most likely have arrived by the time you read this. And with the nice days will come the people for whom you work so hard: the beer-league softball players, the soccer moms, the summer campers, the kids on the playground.

To assist you in getting ahead of the game from a liability angle, we asked Greg Petry, executive director of the Waukegan Park District in suburban Chicago, for some tips:

"Form a safety committee that meets once a month and keep minutes," Greg says. "Establish a procedure to follow up all safety concerns, accidents, complaints, and incidents, and create a form to document complaints or report safety hazards."

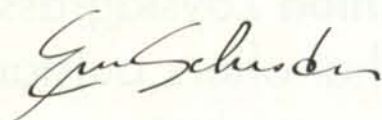
Inspect all your facilities, paying special attention to portable fire extinguishers, alarm systems, back flow valves, and boilers, and videotape all building contents and equipment, he suggests. On your sports fields, check bleachers and benches, fencing, pathways, turf, bases, and signage. "For special events, you need to have a plan for crowd control, traffic, volunteers, emergency facilities, and a lightning protocol," Greg says.

An important part of loss control programs is your staff. "Distribute your policy manual to everyone and have them acknowledge receipt," he says, "and establish discipline and termination procedures for safety violations. You also should have criminal background checks, drug screens and physicals completed before an employee is placed. And your orientation program must be thorough."

Do you have all the correct licensing needed? Does your staff? Are you meeting league standards, Consumer Product Safety Commission standards, ASTM standards? If applicable, can you rely on the opinions of a certified sports turf manager? Are you completing vehicle inspections, daily ones for vans and buses? Greg says you need to be on top of everything for an effective risk management program.

There's a lot more to be said about achieving success in the liability and safety game, so if you don't have the information you should, find it. At the very least, says Greg, you should always be looking for potential hazards, and if something does happen, be prepared to document, respond, and follow up as soon as possible. It'll be much easier to enjoy the nice weather that way, opposed to being deposited in some lawyer's office because you're being sued.

Oops: We neglected to credit the American Society of Agronomy for the illustration on p. 26 in the April issue.



Comments always welcome.
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