



DID YOU KNOW?

AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE MEMBERS

Identifying Risks and Creating a Risk Aware Culture

February 2004

Vol. 11 No. 2

DID YOU KNOW that identifying risks is everyone's responsibility?

Today's reality is that volunteers and staff at all levels are more frequently being asked to perform work that is more complex, more sophisticated and more responsible. The consequences of error can be large, if not catastrophic.

St. John Ambulance needs everyone's support in creating a culture which acknowledges the existence of risk, takes risk management seriously, and both encourages and rewards the identification of risk. This is vital to the success of risk management. To accomplish this awareness, communication and education are key elements.

Communicating openly amongst ourselves to create an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable in discussing the potential risks - big or small is where risk management begins.

We need to understand the full range of risk control options available in our area of the workplace, including the small things that everybody can do to increase safety. We need to think about what issues should be reported, and to whom. For example:

- You are a youth leader and your group has been moved to a new weekly meeting space. Do you know where the fire exits are?
- You and your dog have a new patient to visit at the Children's Hospital. You arrive to meet him and he is attached to many IV tubes, etc. He's really anxious to get close to your dog and pet him. How much contact is safe?
- You arrive at the local summer festival to find that none of the security personnel have arrived to take on crowd control. What do you do?

Some staff and volunteers may not want to "bother" their supervisors with reports of potential risks while others may think that reporting risks to a supervisor is "squealing on one's colleagues," particularly if a risk has been created by the sub-standard performance of a peer. An organization cannot manage the risks it does not identify. Therefore all staff and volunteers should be the eyes and ears of the programs and services we provide when it comes to identifying potential hazards.

To foresee something means it must be seen as probable. It does not mean that one has some sort of prophetic vision as to what might conceivably happen, i.e. it is foreseeable that a broken ladder may cause a fall. The standard for due care is that which any reasonable person would do or not do under similar circumstances. Reasonableness involves foreseeing a potential risk and taking steps to avoid it, but don't forget, circumstances play a part in determining reasonableness.

Risk is a normal part of doing business. It is therefore essential to become aware of the risks in our day-to-day work environment to ensure our safety and that of those around us.

This information has been excerpted from Linda's Graff's book "*Better Safe...Risk Management in Volunteer Programs & Community Services*". *Better Safe ...* contains many practical risk management tips and assessment tools that can help you to identify and manage risks related to your program. It is available through Linda's web site: www.lindagraff.ca