



MCA NEWS

Massachusetts Camping Association Newsletter

Fall 2008

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Membership 2009

It is that time – TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP with Mass Camping Association. Your membership dollars do three things. First and foremost, your money helps to pay for ADS Ventures. ADS is the lobbying firm that pays close attention to legislative issues that might impact camps. They help us lobby, set up meetings and inform us of any issue that might impact our industry. Your support for MCA also provides the infrastructure for the Board of Directors to pursue legislative issues on behalf of the industry. Finally, your support allows us to provide education programs and services for YOU – the members.

Thank you in advance for your 2009 Membership!

What's Next for MCA

Please be on the lookout for your 2009 Membership Renewal kit in the mail very soon - remember, we are "Stronger Together" - so please renew your membership promptly.

Also, please mark your calendars for our next event - the Annual Meeting at the ACA New England Conference, set for Friday, March 27th, 2009, in Manchester, NH at The Radisson Hotel. The time is still to be determined - please watch your email inbox for the exact time and meeting location.

At that meeting, we will be voting on a new slate of Directors, as well as giving you the latest updates on issues that affect Massachusetts Camps. In addition, there will be an open forum to discuss any issues that we are not aware of and some delicious treats

and beverages. Last, but not least, there will be time for networking and fellowship too.

On May 7th, 2009, we will have our 3rd Spring Meeting, where we again plan to have representatives from CORI and DPH who will offer advice and training regarding operating a camp in Massachusetts.

There will be Roundtable discussions, and we will distribute member packets containing "Everything you need to get Camp open for the Season". Please note that this meeting will be moving to a new camp from the Girl Scouts Wind-in-the-Pines site in Plymouth. If your camp would like to host the most important meeting of the year, please contact us!

Round Tables: Successful Networking for Camps

The third edition of the Round Table Discussions was another success for all who attended at Camp Cedar Hill in Waltham, MA on October 16th. Over 32 people representing 25 camps from throughout the state attended.

Participants got to hear updates on what MCA is doing to help keep them updated on upcoming legislative issues and help clear up any questions on current hot topics.

Lucy Norvell, the Director of Public Information for the American Camping Association's New England Section, spoke about the importance of being involved in the MCA as well as the ACA as they do different things for camps. ACA helps out with New England camping issues, but MCA keeps closer eyes on specific state issues. In addition, she highlighted wacky summer weather, camp viruses reported by nurses across the state and the continued increase of staff/camper internet issues. There was a brief discussion about the economy, Ropes Course inspections

Participants then broke up into two groups - resident camps and day camps. Each held its own Round Table discussion about subjects that were important to them.

The **resident camp discussions** topics included lice, mosquito spraying, stomach bugs, drinking policies, and seasonal waivers. Camp Danbee spoke about their use of a company who comes in to do lice checks and treatments. Lice Enders and Life Guards are two local companies who offer this. They are expensive, but do give piece of mind. The American Camp Association recommends you check out www.headlice.org. Lice Meister Comb was also discussed. The comb was described as a bug zapper. The most important thing is to have policies and procedures in place for screening your campers and what to do if they are found, plus get your staff trained to know what lice looks like.

Mosquito spraying has been occurring around New England. Discussion was held about a plan you need to have in place. An example can be found at the MCA website.

The stomach bug hit some camps this summer, which lead to a discussion on camp nurse shortages. Some camps have used nursing students as helpers in the bumps and bruises areas, while others have used staffing agencies.

Drinking policies were offered out to the group. Everything from banning drinking all together to having a place set aside on camp property for 21 plus staff was offered up. The clear message was have a policy that works for your camp and stick to it.

Finally seasonal waivers issues were brought up with the message that even if you are one day late you will lose your waiver for that year, which could allow your staff to claim

unemployment from you in the off season. Get waivers in on time!

In the **day camp discussions** included big move to not have camp July 4th week this year and start the week following. Kids are being pulled out of camps more and more for appointments, etc. Campers with special needs are up significantly and may present new challenges.

Parents are refusing to take their children out of camps for behavior issues. If this happens to you, the group recommended to call 911 and file with DCYF.

Campers with medical issues you need to know about are not being made known to you by parents. Recommendation was made to check what medications they are on and go based on that data to help them be more successful in camp.

Issues of the economy lead to discussions about scholarships, negotiating with parents for fees, early enrollment incentives, etc.

Camper Transportation/Busing – about 50% of camps represented offer busing to camp, of those 25% of their families take advantage of it and it costs those parents about 25% more in tuition to use the camp bus.

Everyone involved felt the discussions were a success for both groups. The clear sentiment was for similar sessions again in the future. The day ended with a delicious cookout lunch of hotdogs & hamburgers, thanks to Camp Danbee, Camp Winagte*Kirkland and Camp Pembroke.

Another Round Table Discussion is in the works for the spring. We welcome you to let us know any topics you would like discussed at upcoming events.

Special Thank You to the Girl Scouts Cedar Hill facility and staff for hosting us for the 2nd year in a row!

MA Camping Legislative Update Fall 2008

ROPES COURSE (Amusement Device)

REGULATIONS - Most folks passed their ropes course inspections easily last year.

Thanks to Emily Parker for hosting the Ropes Course Session last year so everyone knew how to file. **Proposed Fee Increases:** DPS has held off on final promulgation of the amusement fees based upon the public comment. They are finishing up their review and anticipate holding a second public hearing on these fees sometime in January.

LOCAL TAX OPTIONS – MA Towns are

under budget pressures and beginning to look into local option taxes. Voters at town meetings in Brewster and Provincetown approved warrant articles this fall that asked their state legislators to file a special petition that would allow their towns to tax short-term rentals of homes, cottages, time-shares and condos at 9.7 percent. This could effect group rentals. MCA is following this development and looking into options for exemptions of children's camps. This will be a town by town scenario so members will be asked to write to their individual legislators when this news surfaces.

NEW SWIMMING POOL

REGULATIONS – The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act of 2007 will go into effect in December 19, 2008. These *NEW* Federal regulations pertain to pool drains, backup systems and vacuum release systems. Older pools may need to be retrofitted to comply with the new regulations. For details, contact your pool operator or go to www.cpsc.gov/phth/vgpsa.pdf. MA DPH regulations will probably add this to their checklist for pool inspections.

CORI CHECKS – MCA continues to work with the CORI Board on camp related checks and continues to offer the required re-certification training each year. News of note include:

1. CHSB is looking at providing 3rd party checks at the same expanded levels as camps. This would mean that contracted food service, cleaning, building companies etc... would be able to seek authorization to run expanded checks on staff that work for extended periods of time in summer camps. Encourage your contractors to seek this status.

2. Make sure your camp's authorization is current. It is more difficult under the new policies and can take a month to get re-authorized. Re-Authorization is required every 2 Years and requires a mandatory training session. New directors at an Authorized camp should submit their Individual Applications to review CORI results.

3. CORI Training for new and renewed authorizations takes place weekly at their Chelsea Offices. Mass Camping also incorporates training into the spring **“Getting Ready For Camp” gathering – stay tuned for the date and location.**

3. Be sure to take advantage of the online submission of CORI requests.

MIN WAGE and SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT EXEMPTIONS – In 2008, some camps failed to file the appropriate forms to be Certified as Seasonal Employers. This will effect your Unemployment tax and your Health Care calculations by the state. These forms are posted at the MCA website and included in the Spring Mailing. Be sure to take care of these as early as February to be sure you are set.

MA HEALTH CARE REFORM – There is a *NEW* reporting requirement that will go into effect January 2009. The change that is most concerning is the **new requirement for quarterly Fair Share Contribution (FSC) testing**. Currently employers with 11 or more

full-time equivalent employees are required to perform this test annually each year by November 15th. The data used for the testing period is from October 1st through September 30th, this is also referred to as the “determination period”. This period will continue in its current form, however, employers will now need to perform the FSC test at the close of each quarter of the determination period. The first quarter will end on December 31, 2008 and the first quarterly test will begin in January of 2009. Organizations that fail to exceed the testing thresholds will be required to pay the contribution on a quarterly basis. ***Again, annual application to be a Certified Season Employer is important for these calculations.***

Important Note: The above are insights offered by a non-insurance or legal professional and are intended to help you discuss your camps procedures with your local health agent, insurance advisor, and/or attorney. Nothing contained in this is intended to provide anything more than to create awareness. All decisions must be carefully reviewed and discussed.

Membership Benefits

By Dave Peterson

About MCA

The Massachusetts Camping Association (MCA) is THE LEADING VOICE for organized camping in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We advise state legislators, speak out on issues related to the camping industry, and represent the camping community. MCA represents camping on a state and local level where careful monitoring and action are often critical. MCA also serves as an educational and collaborative resource for local camps, assisting member organizations increase their knowledge of regulatory and legislative issues. MCA is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and retains professional services for its legislative activities.

Fall and Spring “Workshop” program located at a camp in Massachusetts. Program typically includes “round table” discussions about various camp topics and presentations officials from Massachusetts State governing boards. Examples: Criminal background checks, Department of Public Health licensing department.

Fall and early Spring electronic **Newsletters** updating current status of Mass Camping Association and legislative issues.

Comprehensive website with members only section. Site has **direct links to Massachusetts state regulations**, forms and other invaluable information.

Ongoing **legislative update emails** keeping members aware of pending legislation and changes in regulations that may impact camps.

Professional **resource available via email and phone**. Members of MCA who have spent hours and hours working with state

legislators are available to members to help when issues related to licensing arise.

Annually updated **“Opening Camp in Massachusetts” checklist** that aids camp directors to make sure they cover all aspects of regulations in the Massachusetts.

Current issues:

- Monitoring new fees for Ropes Courses
- New Reporting requirements for Health Care Reform begin January 2009.
- Monitoring Local Tax Options that may include camps.
- Continually working with the Criminal History Systems Board (CORI) to make sure needs of camps are met.
- Collaborating with canoe and kayak program vendors to make sure proposed regulations will improve safety, but not over-burden camp industry.

HOW TO CONTACT MCA:

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