



Health & Safety: Risk Awareness for Participants/Families at Camp Chief Hector YMCA

Our Top Priority

The well-being of all participants and staff at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA is our top priority. We invest significant time and resources into creating a trustworthy and industry-leading environment, so that everyone at camp will experience the benefits of their choice to join us, without unacceptable exposure to hazards.

Choosing to come to camp does have many documented benefits, and it also has particular risks. Please take some time to actively engage in the following information. Participants/families need to know the risks associated with a summer camp experience at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA, and to accept that they are taking risks.

We are proud of our record in caring for children, youth and families, and we are proud of our ongoing work focused on this goal. Please review the information below and the related specific program information on our website. If you have any questions or comments we would be pleased to hear from you.

Safety & Risk Management

At the Camp Chief Hector YMCA we often refer to our risk management plans. Participants/families may be curious about this term, and about the difference between “safety” and “risk management”. In camping, as in many spheres of life, we do not speak of *safety* in an absolute sense. We accept that there are inherent risks associated with all of our choices and we take specific actions to reduce or control those risks. We manage risks so that they will be encountered at a level that is tolerable. Riding a bicycle, for example, has associated risks – but, by wearing a helmet and respecting transportation laws, most people decide that the risk is tolerable. Therefore, rather than guaranteeing safety, we have risk management plans.

There can be no doubt that some of the risks of camping are intrinsic to the enjoyment and growth experienced at camp. For instance, there is some emotional risk involved when meeting new friends, and there is physical risk involved in a hiking trip. At the Camp Chief Hector YMCA, we manage these risks with authoritative planning, training and equipment.

Let's follow these two examples. We manage the emotional risks of meeting new friends by training with child and youth care practices, and we adopt fun, inclusive programs where young people can grow together with guidance. We manage the risks of mountain hiking by deciding upon goals, by reviewing a destination, by supporting trained staff, by carrying appropriate equipment, and by reviewing our hiking program with respected authorities.

Risks Encountered in Camp Chief Hector YMCA Programs

Both activities in the previous examples involve risks. To be clear, any of the activities at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA involve certain emotional and physical risks and many of them include the risk of disability, death or psychological trauma in the event of a serious incident.

Some of these hazards may be familiar to us in our home communities: motor vehicle transportation, lightning, tree-fall, uneven ground, inclement weather, fire, hot liquids, infectious illnesses, and equipment failure.

Some of these hazards may be more unique to the setting at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA: lake water, river water, entrapment in vegetation or equipment while in moving water, falls from a High Ropes facility due to equipment failure or



an error in judgment, wildlife encounters (including cougar, grizzly bear, black bear and elk), falls from horses, bites/kicks/other-encounters with horses, rock fall, uncontrolled slide on snow or rock, a fall from heights, steep terrain, and remoteness from emergency medical services – including the failure of communication technology.

The hazards listed, and other hazards not listed, can pose a risk to even a well-trained leader. Any of the Camp Chief Hector YMCA's activities can, due to an error in judgment, or to the factors of nature beyond a leader's control, become hazardous and potentially life-threatening.

Participants/families must weigh the risks that may be encountered at camp with the strengths of the Camp Chief Hector YMCA's risk management plans and with the benefits of the camping experience.

The Camp Chief Hector YMCA's Risk Management

Here is a short list of points that are part of our larger risk management plans:

- Staff have program-appropriate First Aid certification and training
- Staff and volunteers have Criminal Reference checks
- The Camp Chief Hector YMCA is Accredited by the Alberta Camping Association
- The Camp Chief Hector YMCA has support and oversight from the YMCA Calgary Health & Safety Manager and the YMCA Calgary Health & Safety Committee
- The Camp Chief Hector YMCA participates in regular internal and external safety audits
- The Camp Chief Hector YMCA cooperates with land managers and permitting authorities
- The Camp Chief Hector YMCA's training is reviewed by authoritative outdoor leaders
- The Camp Chief Hector YMCA participates in risk management research and development through outdoor activity conferences and workshops
- The Camp Chief Hector YMCA reviews all of its family and staff surveys

Contact Us

We encourage participants/families to share questions or comments concerning risk management at the Camp Chief Hector YMCA. Please feel free to speak with a Camp Director/Manager about any aspect of the inherent risks of camping, and about our risk management plan.

[Vanessa Townsend](#), Summer Camp Director, Ph: 403-673-3858 ext 301

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