

The Safety Minute

They say mothers have ‘eyes in the back of their heads’. The same must be true of Team and Assistant Team Leaders, and good Youthline Mentors and participants. To help us all develop these very useful ‘eyes’, Youthline has instituted the Safety Minute to be used as often as needed (several times a day) on all international service trips.

The basic concept is that team members should pause for a moment, and together assess out loud any dangers or accidents or health issues that could arise in the course of the activity. If a ‘Safety Moment’ is used often, many potential hazards can be avoided. It is impossible to mention every time or every occasion or every consideration that should be taken account of in a Safety Moment. The most important part of a Safety Moment is to look around, and engage as many individuals as possible in the thought process of ‘what could go wrong’.

For example, upon **arriving at an airport departure gate**, the Team Leader could:

- Ask for a roll call.
- Ask everyone to check for their passport. Is it in the exact spot designated for it, and is that spot secure?
- Ask if everyone can put his or her hand on their boarding pass? Is there a seat assignment?
- Do you have your valuables?

When **boarding the vehicles** in-country to go to the work site, a Leader or a Mentor or participant could be assigned to review:

- Does everyone have sunscreen, bug spray, snacks, hand sanitizer, WATER?
- Does everyone know his/her work assignment for the day? Does everyone have his/her supplies? Work gloves, eye protection, etc. if doing construction and if applicable?
- If the vehicle is anything other than a standard car/van/bus, what safety precautions should be taken?

Before starting **Opening (or Closing) ceremonies, or a Carnival (Fun Fair)**, someone could be assigned to review:

- Is anything anyone going to be doing conceivably dangerous in any way? Could someone fall in a gymnastics or cheerleading move? Could someone trip on something in a group dance performance?
- What are the activities and what could conceivably hurt someone? For example, are people climbing or running in a slippery, wet, unlevel area?
- Are there facilities for hand washing, and if not, be careful not to touch your face or mouth. Don’t eat anything with dirty hands.

Before **beginning a construction activity**, everyone should stop and assess potential hazards **each day**:

- Obvious issues are to be mindful when working with hammers and nails, saws, chisels.
- Wear work gloves! Especially when working with shovels, rakes, cement. Properly clean and store gloves.
- When picking up heavy objects, lift with your legs, not your back! (this needs to be demonstrated)
- Don’t be a show off and lift more than you are able. Ask for help!
- When climbing ladders, be especially cautious.
- Be sure no one is working directly above you on a structure, in case they drop something.