

Summer, 2004

“Everyone Is a Risk Manager”

Hank James -- Director of Integrated Risk Management and Insurance

by James Burger

“**R**isk management is a mindset.” Hank James is clear about that as we speak in his office, amidst the sounds of car horns outside. “We practice risk management every day, in everything we do. Crossing the street, for example, is a matter of evaluation, of the awareness of risk.”

Risk Management focuses on protecting the assets of the institution and making sure that financial losses are minimized. The work of James and his team is highly evaluative and predictive. Simply put, the Office of Integrated Risk Management and Insurance (OIRMI) assesses what could happen and the likelihood of it happening. In the case of accidents, for example, scenarios include pedestrian injuries, contractor liabilities, student activities, vehicular mishaps, injured workers, and building damage caused by fires or floods.

Currently, a major area of concern is travel risk, and James’s office is implementing various new programs to address the issue. Effective August 1, OIRMI will begin contracting with International S.O.S., an organization that provides services related to overseas travel. Furthermore, OIRMI has developed a revised driver safety program that will also begin in August.

James notes that the College will be undertaking various construction projects and these, by their nature, contain risks. Working with Environmental Health & Safety, the Real Estate Office, and Facilities Operations and Management, OIRMI is developing a series of contractor safety initiatives aimed at finding ways to transfer risk. OIRMI also facilitates risk transfer by overseeing the College’s insurance requirements for contractors and vendors, as well as for others using College facilities, by managing the Certificate of Insurance program. Through this process, OIRMI maintains evidence that, should these parties be responsible for a loss, there is insurance in place to protect the College.

“We take a proactive approach,” says James. “The College has a strong commitment to the function of risk management, and we’re extending our outreach to the community in order to heighten awareness. It’s important for people to recognize Risk Management as a resource, not as a bureaucratic body,” he emphasizes.



Photo: James Burger

The Risk Management Team

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“We’re looking for a win-win situation for everyone by asking risk-related questions and by offering solutions that will benefit each operating unit. We also want to provide a comfort level for administrators.”

A number of communications vehicles are in the works. OIRMI is in the process of updating their Web site and will be producing a series of print materials on key topics such as travel safety and work place injury prevention. In August, Risk Management will begin participating in HR’s Orientation Program as one of the featured presenters. Additionally, a Risk Management Committee comprising individuals from across the institution has been established.

Director of the Office of Integrated Risk Management & Insurance since October 2001, James has been in the insurance field for more than thirty years. He began his career in risk management in 1981, working with a health care organization outside of Washington, D.C. He came to Dartmouth from Loma Linda University Medical Center, in southern California.

Born in Miami, James grew up in Chicago. He holds a bachelor’s in business administration from Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, and MBA degrees in general business and strategic leadership from Amberton University, in Garland, Texas. Additionally, he is a Fellow in Risk Management (FRM) and an Associate in Risk Management (ARM), the two highest designations from the Risk & Insurance Management Society. In June, James, who has three children, celebrated his thirtieth wedding anniversary. A soft-spoken man who enjoys sitting by a fire and reading in his spare time, he appreciates the “quaintness of the Upper Valley” after living in urban areas for most of his life.

When describing the challenges of his work, James tells me, “My efforts are supplemented by an excellent staff that works well together. Our office reaffirms that there is adequate protection for the institution, looking at ways to minimize risk, save money and preserve resources. This team is prepared to move ahead in providing risk management strategies and resources for the Dartmouth community well into the future.” As Hank James says, “There is risk in everything we do; it’s impossible to avoid risk completely.” So the next time you’re at a busy intersection, bear his words in mind: “Everyone is a risk manager.”