



Healthcare Fire Safety

A Factsheet for Staff of Healthcare Facilities

Fire safety in health care facilities—hospitals, nursing homes, clinics—presents a specialized response. Patients and families have trusted you with the safety of people who, in many cases, cannot help themselves.

Healthcare Facilities

Fire is a serious threat for any health-care facility. Many patients have special needs that make them especially vulnerable in a fire emergency, thus increasing the risk of fire-casualties. Healthcare staff must therefore make every effort to prevent fires from starting and must be prepared to respond if a fire breaks out.

Fire Hazards

The most common cause of fire in health care facilities is from **smoking materials**. If smoking is permitted in your facility, all staff should know the smoking rules and be ready to enforce them.

- If smoking is allowed, large, deep, non-tip ashtrays should be used. Ashtrays should be emptied often into metal containers.
- Smoking should never be allowed where oxygen is in use or is stored.

Another major fire hazard is **faulty or improperly used equipment**. All equipment should be checked on a routine schedule. Be especially attentive to the following equipment hazards:

- Cracked or split cords or plugs on electrical equipment.
- Overloaded extension cords or

cords placed where they may be stepped on.

- Dirty or greasy kitchen equipment.
- Full laundry lint screens.
- Any indicated malfunction of an oxygen machine or gas compressor.

Fire Response

Know the following:

- Your facility's emergency plan.
- Location of fire alarms and how to operate them.
- How to shut off oxygen machines and other compressed gas systems.
- Location of fire extinguishers and how to use them.
- How to move patients safely and quickly if necessary.

Remember the RACE Against Fire

R**ESCUE** any individual directly threatened by fire. Patient safety is the primary consideration, so move patients who are in immediate danger away from smoke and flames. Place the patient in a nearby room, behind a closed door.

A**CTIVATE** the alarm if you discover a fire or respond immediately to the alarm if you hear it sound.

C**ONFINE** the fire by closing doors to slow the spread of smoke and flame. Close the doors of patients' rooms. In general, residents are safer in a closed room than in a smoke filled hallway.

E**XTINGUISH** the fire only if the fire is small, and if you know how to operate a fire extinguisher. Be sure the area has been cleared and the fire department called.

For More Information

Contact:

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