

Preparing for a fire

All health-care facilities should have a complete emergency plan, and the Safety Director or Risk-Management Director should supervise regular drills to ensure that employees know what to do in a fire or other emergency.



- All staff should know the location of fire alarms in their work area, and should be trained to operate them in the dark.
- All staff should know the location of portable fire extinguishers in their work areas and know how — and when — to use them.
- All staff should know how to shut off oxygen and other piped gas systems, if instructed to do so.

In the event of fire

- If a fire breaks out, stay calm to set an example for patients.
- Report the fire, following the health-care facility's procedures and policies.
- Move patients who are in immediate danger away from smoke or flames.
- Close the doors of patients' room and any other doors to slow the spread of smoke and flame. Reassure patients who remain in their rooms.
- Fight the fire *only* if the fire is small and contained (as in the case of a wastebasket fire), and if you know how to operate a portable fire extinguisher. Before fighting even a small fire, *be sure* that the area has been evacuated and that the fire has been reported.

Remember

Patients and their families have trusted your health-care facility with the safety of people who, in many cases, cannot help themselves. Each health-care facility staff member carries the responsibility of ensuring the safety of patients, staff, and visitors.

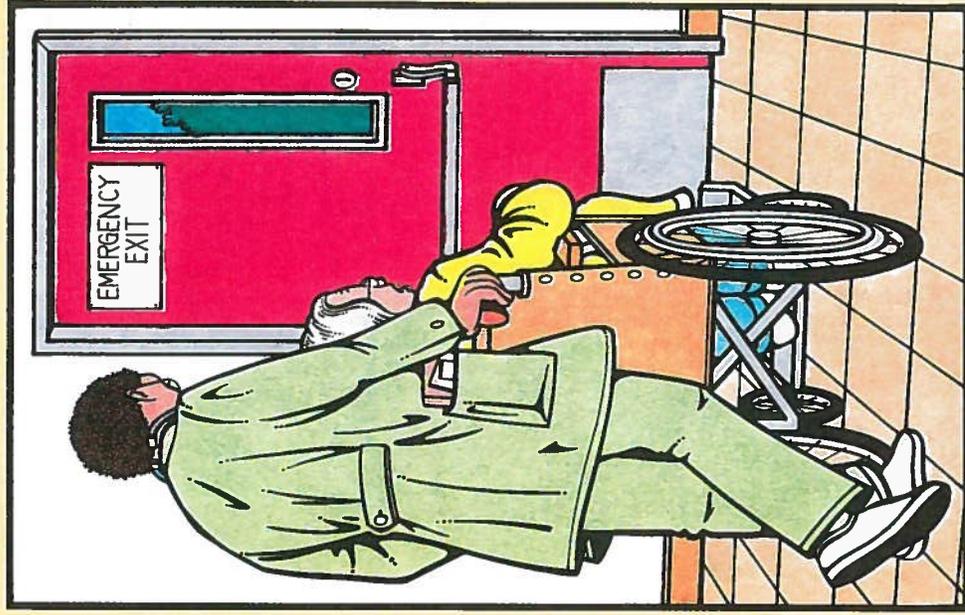
Detailed requirements for health-care facility firesafety are provided in **NFPA 99, Standard for Healthcare Facilities**. Contact the National Fire Protection Association at the address below.

**EMERGENCY
FIRE & AMBULANCE
742-3300**

**POLICE
DIAL 911
GIVE NAME, LOCATION
& NEAREST INTERSECTION**



Firesafety in Health-Care Facilities



Fire is a threat that no health-care facility can ignore. Many patients have special needs that make them especially vulnerable in a fire emergency, thus increasing the risk of fire-casualties.

Health-care staffs must therefore make every effort to prevent fires from starting and must be prepared to respond if a fire breaks out.

Controlling fire hazards

Smoking

Careless handling of smoking materials is the most common cause of fire in health-care facilities.

Many facilities have banned smoking. If staff or patients are permitted to smoke, all staff should understand the smoking rules and help to enforce them. Employees must share the responsibility of restricting smoking to designated areas.

Post smoking rules conspicuously and apply them to everyone — patients, staff, non-facility workers, volunteer workers, visitors, and delivery people.

Never tolerate smoking in an area where oxygen is in use or is stored. This includes operating, recovery, and emergency rooms, intensive-care units, and respiratory-therapy rooms.



Clearly designate laboratories where flammable or non-flammable gases or flammable liquids are used as no-smoking areas.

Provide large, deep, non-tip ashtrays in smoking areas. Be sure that ashtrays are emptied frequently into metal containers used exclusively for that purpose.



Equipment

Faulty equipment and the improper use of equipment is another major cause of fire in health-care facilities.

Appropriate departments should check all equipment on a routine schedule.

Clean lint and grease from cooking and laundry equipment, ventilator hoods, filters, and ducts on a regular basis.

As a matter of routine, all staff should check for and report any cracked or split cords or plugs on the equipment they use.

Be especially careful of equipment patients may bring from home (if allowed).

Avoid using extension cords whenever possible. Before using an extension cord, be sure its use does not exceed its specified amperage load. (Staff should consult the appropriate technical personnel in all cases.) Do not run extension cords across doorways or where they can be stepped on. Do not plug one extension cord into another and never plug more than one extension cord into an outlet.

General firesafety

- Keep combustibles — such as paper products, linens, and clothing — away from heat-producing devices, including reading lamps.
- Do not allow devices that produce sparks — including motor-driven toys or appliances — in patient areas where oxygen is used.
- Store gas cylinders securely, away from patients. Be certain cylinder caps are used when cylinders are not in use.
- Keep maintenance and storage areas clean and free of trash, sawdust, wood shavings, oily rags, and other hazards.
- Keep halls and stairways clear.
- Be sure that EXIT signs are always lighted and that emergency lighting is in working order.
- Never prop open emergency doors. Fire doors not only let people out, they keep fire from spreading.

