



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. Health-care 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 extension cords being used as permanent wiring.

- 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

RESCUE 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.

ACTIVATE the alarm if you discover a fire or respond immediately to the alarm if you hear it sound.

CONFINE 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.

EXTINGUISH 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:

**Tacoma Fire Department
Public Education Office
253.591.5740**

www.tacomafiredepartment.org