

Fire Response in Senior Care Facilities: Infrastructure Aspects

Fire and smoke can cause significant amounts of damage as well as potential injuries and deaths in senior care facilities. Several elements can contribute to the spread of fires and dangerous smoke and hot gases in the air, including oxygen deficiencies, flammable gases, plastics, volatile chemicals, and other hazards.

Senior care facilities are built to protect all residents, including those who are not capable of self-preservation. Building construction and fire prevention codes, automatic detection systems, fire suppression systems, and training for staff members are all essential elements that facilities need to have in place to prevent fires. Additionally, knowing how to respond to a fire and/or smoke condition is paramount to avoid serious injuries and potentially death to residents, visitors, and staff members.

The following checklist focuses on numerous infrastructure aspects for fire prevention. Senior care facility leaders and staff members can use this tool to help assess their fire safety measures for these critical areas of a facility.

	Yes	No
<i>Alarms, Fire Suppression Systems, and Sprinkler Systems</i>		
Is a system in place to ensure alarms and fire suppression systems are tested and functional?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your facility comply with local requirements for placement and maintenance of fire alarms, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire suppression systems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are alarms and detectors serviced regularly and continuously kept in working order?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Alarms, Fire Suppression Systems, and Sprinkler Systems (continued)		
Have wet-pipe, dry-pipe, and preaction sprinkler systems been tested and maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are Interim Life Safety Measures (ILSMs) implemented when a fire alarm system or automatic sprinkler system is taken out of service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If an ILSM is in place, did staff members receive education before its implementation, and did they complete education sign-in sheets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members create and maintain documentation of any implemented ILSM?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If an ILSM is in place, is an extra fire drill being conducted in the space?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all fire department connections (FDCs) and fire hydrants uniquely identified on the campus and on an overall drawing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members ensure that nothing is hanging from sprinkler heads, sprinkler pipes, or smoke detectors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members ensure that sprinkler escutcheons are not painted and not sealed to the ceiling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members ensure that storage is kept 18" below sprinkler heads?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General Safety		
Do staff members know where the oxygen zone valves are located, what areas they control, who is authorized to use them, and how to use them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the medical gas zone valve boxes easily accessible and not blocked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are medical gas zone valve boxes correctly labeled with correct room numbers, not a range of numbers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fire alarm pull stations easily accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fire doors clear to allow closure and latching?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are exit doors kept clear and not blocked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
General Safety (continued)		
Are corridors and hallways kept clear with no storage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can staff members see two exit signs in corridors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members ensure that resident rooms have sufficient space for their personal items, furniture, and assistive devices without creating fire hazards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are cleaning solvents and oils properly stored?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are combustibles and flammable liquids stored inside an approved safety cabinet in indoor locations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrative Offices		
Are fire safety features checked regularly (fire extinguishers, exit lights, emergency lights, exit doors, smoke detectors) and free to access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are work areas clean and clutter free?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are electrical circuits not overloaded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do administrators review the fire safety plan and emergency action plan on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exit Doors and Routes		
Are all exit doors, exit routes, and essential pathways free of clutter and obstacles and not blocked (e.g., with watch beds, medication carts, linen carts, wheelchairs, workstations on wheels, housekeeping carts)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are local/state regulations on locking doors and maintaining fire doors followed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all exit signs installed showing proper exit routes and correctly lit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all doors that do not provide egress marked with "NO EXIT" signage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does each stairwell have appropriate signage indicating the direction of travel to the exit and level of exit discharge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the outside of each exterior exit door numbered or uniquely identified for emergency first responders' access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Exit Doors and Routes (continued)		
Is emergency lighting provided in the means of egress?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are exit discharges maintained during adverse weather?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the building exterior well lit, and is there sufficient outdoor shelter for residents if an evacuation occurs during inclement weather?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electrical and Lighting Aspects		
Does your facility ensure that electrical receptacles are not overloaded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do electrical surge protectors/relocatable power taps meet UL 1363A, and are they properly mounted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are surge protectors NOT used to provide power to appliances or daisy chained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If extension cords are needed, has facility maintenance/engineering been contacted to evaluate the electrical requirements and install a permanent electrical receptacle? (Extension cords should be used <i>only</i> in temporary situations.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are electrical cords and plugs inspected regularly to ensure they are in good condition and show no damage, nicks, or frayed areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are staff prohibited from running electrical cords under rugs or carpets or overloading electrical outlets or extension cords?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do trained/licensed staff ensure proper maintenance of electrical wiring and equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all emergency lights installed correctly and tested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the facility ensure that no wires are exposed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are staff members instructed to unplug devices after use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have staff ensured that alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not mounted above electrical outlets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Laundry Area		
Are washer and dryer lint filters cleaned after every load?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the ductwork on these machines cleaned on a routine basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the area behind the dryers inspected on a routine basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are electric tumbler motors kept free of dust and lint?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the laundry area free from excessive amounts of lint build-up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a fire extinguisher in close proximity to dryers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fans turned off after every shift?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members ensure that no mop heads are put into the dryers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extinguishers		
Are extinguishers inspected each month to confirm proper working order?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all extinguishers in the correct location?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all extinguishers easy to get to with nothing blocking them or obstructing them from view?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are any safety seals missing or broken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are any of the extinguishers damaged on the outside?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are any of the nozzles leaking, corroded, or clogged?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are pressure gauge readings in proper position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the instructions easily seen and legible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the extinguishers full (test by lifting and/or manually weighing)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are signage and symbols above extinguishers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are portable extinguishers that hang on the wall fully charged?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<i>Extinguishers (continued)</i>		
Are portable extinguishers type ABC?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are portable fire extinguishers selected, placed, inspected, tested, and maintained following the National Fire Protection Association Standard for Portable Fire Extinguishers (NFPA10)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Shops, Fuel Tanks, Facilities Areas, Boiler Rooms, Mechanical Rooms, Electrical Rooms, Loading Docks, Storage Rooms, Trash Rooms</i>		
Are fire extinguishers located by hazards in the above locations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are spill kits located by the fuel tanks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there egress signage, and is the lighting well maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there bollards around fuel storage tanks/refueling zones?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an open area surrounding outdoor fuel tanks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are storage buildings located at least 30 feet away from the facility, if possible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does facility maintenance ensure that lawn mowers, grass trimmers, and snow blowers (if applicable) are properly stored?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If any outdoor cooking on grills is taking place or any campfires are present, does facility maintenance ensure the safe use of propane gas, cooking oils, and frying as well as encouraging the use of wooden or steel cooking sticks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Kitchens</i>		
Are kitchens monitored, especially during meal preparation times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are grease and other flammable materials kept separate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff ensure that grease and other flammable materials do not accumulate on kitchen equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are flammable gas containers (e.g., cooking spray), liquids, oils, or other items stored far away from cooking equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<i>Kitchens (continued)</i>		
Are flammable substances safely and securely stored in a flammable liquids cabinet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the appliances' grease traps emptied on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are grills and exhaust hoods inspected and cleaned regularly to ensure that nothing flammable/combustible can accumulate or fall into channels, cracks, and gaps?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a Class K Extinguisher installed near the deep fat fryer/grill area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there signage to operate the wet chemical extinguishing system first before using the Class K extinguisher?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a manual shut-off valve for natural gas, and is it properly marked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are kitchen hood nozzles heads kept clean?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the manual activation valve for the cooking hood extinguishment system located within easy reach, not blocked, and clearly marked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the wet chemical extinguishing system discharge heads pointed toward cooking appliances as applicable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are wet chemical nozzles covered to prevent grease accumulation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Facility Grounds</i>		
Does facility maintenance ensure that vegetation is cut back around the perimeter of the building?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does facility maintenance ensure that conifer trees are removed or thinned out from the immediate area of the building?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does facility maintenance ensure that the grounds are mowed to about 100 feet around the perimeter of the building?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does facility maintenance ensure no outside burning takes place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Facility Grounds (continued)		
Does facility maintenance ensure that a 100-foot-section of garden hose is available and connected to the hose bib?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does facility maintenance ensure that wood siding, cedar shakes, exterior wood paneling, and other highly combustible materials are treated with fire retardant chemicals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smoking		
Does your facility conduct annual physical and cognitive assessments of residents who are permitted to smoke?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your facility have supervised smoking areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members have quick access to fire alarm pull stations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do residents who smoke have quick access to fire extinguishers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do residents who smoke have quick access to the facility's notification system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resources

For more guidance on this topic, see MedPro's [Checklist: Fire Response in Senior Care Facilities](#). Another helpful resource is the National Fire Protection Association's [Codes and Standards](#).

This document does not constitute legal or medical advice and should not be construed as rules or establishing a standard of care. Because the facts applicable to your situation may vary, or the laws applicable in your jurisdiction may differ, please contact your attorney or other professional advisors if you have any questions related to your legal or medical obligations or rights, state or federal laws, contract interpretation, or other legal questions.

MedPro Group is the marketing name used to refer to the insurance operations of The Medical Protective Company, Princeton Insurance Company, PLICO, Inc. and MedPro RRG Risk Retention Group. All insurance products are underwritten and administered by these and other Berkshire Hathaway affiliates, including National Fire & Marine Insurance Company. Product availability is based upon business and/or regulatory approval and may differ among companies.

© 2024 MedPro Group Inc. All rights reserved.