



Oklahoma State Department of Health
Creating a State of Health

June 29, 2009

To: Licensed Nursing, Skilled and Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded

RE: Provider Letter 09-02
Air Conditioning and Comfort Levels
Incident Reporting Procedures

Dear Administrator:

Frail and/or elderly residents and clients are particularly vulnerable to adverse effects from heat exposure. It is a licensure requirement for long term care nursing facilities and for intermediate care facilities for persons with mental retardation to maintain inside temperatures not to exceed 80 degrees in the common areas or resident rooms. In addition, the comfort of the residents needs to be considered even when the room temperature has not reached 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

If your air conditioning fails or is not cooling adequately, it is important to have the air conditioners repaired or replaced as soon as possible. Meantime, it is also important that you have a plan in place and to implement that plan to keep the residents comfortable and hydrated in accordance with their medical plans of care.

It is recommended that all long term care facilities monitor and record the daily temperature reading in each hall between 3:30 PM and 5:30 PM including the resident rooms at the end of the halls. When indoor temperatures rise to above 80 degrees, as a temporary short-term measure, the air conditioning should be supplemented with fans in the resident rooms and corridors of hallways to provide movement of air for the comfort of the residents. If there is any danger of fire resulting from overload of electrical circuits or to the safety of the residents through the use of room and corridor fans, it will be necessary for the facility to remove residents to other, safer facilities.

Indoor temperatures above 80 degrees need to be monitored every two hours and measured four or five feet from the floor. When the temperature of any distinct portion of the facility exceeds 85 degrees, residents in that portion of the facility must be removed to a complying portion of the facility or to other appropriate placement and this agency notified of the action.

If your facility exceeds 80 degrees, this is a reportable incident that affects the life and safety of the residents as it could cause physical harm or mental anguish and you will need to include a plan to protect the residents. If this occurs in your facility, fax an incident report within 24 hours to the Oklahoma State Department of Health, fax number 1-866-239-7553 or (405) 271-4172.

The follow up report must be submitted within five days and will need to include measures that have been taken to correct the problem and to prevent residents from further exposure to excessive temperatures. If the incident has not been fully resolved, a final report is required at the time of resolution. The required incident reporting form can be found online at www.ok.gov/health/. This can be filled out online, printed and faxed to OSDH Long Term Care using the fax numbers mentioned above.

Regulatory References for Summer Temperature (State)

Chapter 675, Nursing and Specialized Facilities and The Nursing Home Care Act, Subchapter 5. Physical Plant, 310:675-5-20. Mechanical requirements (b)(1) states that the indoor summer design temperature shall be 80 degrees Fahrenheit for all areas occupied by residents.

Regulatory Reference for temperatures at a safe and comfortable level (Federal Nursing and Skilled Nursing Facilities)

The Code of Regulations at 42 CFR 483.15(h)(6), states facilities initially certified after October 1, 1990 must maintain a temperature range of 71-81 degrees Fahrenheit.

Regulatory Reference for temperatures within normal comfort range (Intermediate Care Facilities for Persons with Mental Retardation)

The Code of Regulations at 42 CFR 483.470(e)(2) states the facility must maintain the temperature and humidity within a normal comfort range. 483.470(e)(i) states a "normal comfort range" in most instances is defined as not going below a temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit or exceeding a temperature of 81 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you have any questions, you may call Jennifer McKinnon, RN, Long Term Care Coordinator, at 1-800-747-8419 or (405) 271-6868 or e-mail her at Jennifem@health.ok.gov.

Sincerely



Dorya Huser
Chief, Long Term Care

cc: DHS Aging Services Division, State LTC Ombudsman
Oklahoma Association of Health Care providers
Oklahoma Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
Oklahoma Health Care Authority
Oklahoma State Board of Examiners of Nursing Home Administrators
OSDH/ Legal Division/ Mary Womack