

Fire Safety, Alcohol-Based Hand Rubs: New CMS Regulations.

On September 22, 2006 the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published new regulations in the Federal Register.

Smoke Detectors Required

Patient Rooms in Nursing Facilities

Effective October 23, 2006 long-term care facilities must at least have battery-operated smoke detectors in patient rooms, that is, unless there is a fire sprinkler system that services the room or a central smoke alarm system in the building with a detector in the room.

Alcohol-Based Hand Rub Dispensers

Existing CMS regulations already allowed alcohol-based hand rub dispensers in patient rooms but not in corridors or other common areas of healthcare facilities, based on fire-safety considerations.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has advocated for their increased availability as an infection-control measure, citing decades of experience with alcohol-based hand rubs in European hospitals with little fire risk.

CMS will now allow the dispensers outside patient rooms if placed in accordance with the latest amendments to the Life Safety Code published by the National Fire Protection Association.

We have CMS's Federal Register announcement on our website at <http://www.nursinglaw.com/CMShandrubs.pdf>.

Hand-Rub Dispensers

Other Liability Considerations

The CMS article delves into legal liability considerations apart from fire safety.

CMS cautions healthcare facilities about unsupervised dementia patients ingesting the liquid from the dispensers and about the slip-and-fall risk from these liquid spilled or allowed to drip on the floor.

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