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Free e-learning module aims to reduce infections in long term care settings

An innovative online educational module that shows how to apply the principles of high reliability to reducing infections in long term care settings is available for free from The Joint Commission. The centerpiece of the project is a 50-minute e-learning tool, "[Applying High Reliability Principles to the Prevention and Control of Infections in Long Term Care](#)," which includes examples, quizzes, discussion questions and other resources for nursing home and assisted living staff to learn and test their knowledge about high reliability in health care. The learning module can be viewed all at once or in two parts and is recommended for all staff levels in a long term care facility – from the environmental services staff to the administrator. Participants will learn:

- Characteristics of high reliability health care
- How infection prevention and control practices in long term care can incorporate high reliability principles
- How to take a systems approach to preventing errors related to infection prevention and control
- Ways to apply the concepts of high reliability to infection prevention in their organization



Partially funded through a conference grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the module is free to anyone – not just Joint Commission customers – and is available online or in CD formats. The module also includes a searchable index of resources and links to other sources of information. (Contact: Kristine Donofrio, kdonofrio@jointcommission.org)

Accreditation

Tips for maintaining an automatic sprinkler system

Health care organizations must test and maintain various sprinkler system components to ensure optimal performance. Several elements of performance (EPs) in the Environment of Care standard EC.02.03.05 delineate which tests are required and with what frequency automatic sprinkler systems should be tested and maintained. This article provides tips for compliance. Much of this information is found in the annex of the appropriate codes. Annex material is not enforceable, but is available for informational purposes.

EP 7: Every six months, the organization tests water-storage tank high- and low-water level alarms. The completion date of the tests is documented.

During the test, staff should check that the water level switch receives a signal when the water level is raised or lowered by three inches (76.2 mm) from the required level of a pressurized tank, or 12 inches (305 mm) from the required level of a non-pressurized tank. Also, check that the tank returns to the required level at the completion of the test.

EP 8: Every month during cold weather, the organization tests water-storage tank temperature alarms. The completion date of the tests is documented.

Organizations in colder areas must verify that an alarm is triggered when the water temperature falls to 40 degrees Fahrenheit. See NFPA 22, *Water Tanks for Private Fire Protection*, which includes lowest one-day mean temperature information. If an authority with proper jurisdiction assesses the tank as not being exposed to freezing conditions, then alarm requirements (and therefore testing requirements) don't apply.

EP 9: *Every 12 months, the organization tests main drains at system low point or at all system risers. The completion date of the tests is documented.*

Maintain detailed records of main drain tests from year to year to benchmark performance and identify anomalies. Documentation should identify the system riser, static pressure, residual pressure, time required to return pressure to normal, test date, and initials or signature of the person conducting the test. It is important to note that the main drain test is not a substitute for checking the fire protection valves. In-house staff or a competent vendor who understands the testing process and the meaning of the results should perform the main drain tests. These individuals are not required to be certified (unless required by the local or state authority having jurisdiction), and special test sheets are not necessary, but all test results must be documented, dated, and signed or initialed.

EP 10: *Every quarter, the organization inspects all fire department water supply connections. The completion dates of the inspections are documented.*

Fire department connections (FDCs) enable the fire department to pump supplemental water into a building sprinkler or standpipe system. Quarterly inspections should be documented and verify:

- FDCs are visible, accessible, and not blocked by fences, vegetation, snow or other obstacles
- Couplings and swivels are not damaged and rotate smoothly
- All gaskets are in place and in good condition
- Identification signs are in place
- Check valve is installed and not leaking
- Automatic drain valve is in place at the check valve and operating properly (except in areas not prone to freezing)
- Fire department connection clapper or flapper is in place and operating properly over its full range
- All plugs or caps are in place and undamaged

If an FDC cap is missing, the connection can get clogged and no longer function. If this occurs, the organization may be required to retest its FDCs and check valves. Vandalism and theft – especially in urban areas – have led to the use of security chains, covers or locking caps for FDCs. If these devices are used, make sure the equipment is installed by or with the approval of the local authority having jurisdiction.

For more information, including the main drain testing procedure, see the June 2014 issue of *Joint Commission Perspectives*. (Contact: George Mills, gmills@jointcommission.org)

Resources

AAACN white paper: Ambulatory nurse residency programs urgently needed

A new white paper from the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing, "[The Need for an Ambulatory Nurse Residency Program](#)," calls for a formalized, competency-based nurse residency program for all nurses new to ambulatory practice. According to AAACN, implementing such residencies would meet workforce needs and fully prepare registered nurses for the complex and demanding environment of ambulatory care. The paper, available for free, was written by the AAACN Ambulatory Nursing Taskforce for all R.N.s practicing in ambulatory care settings.

New on the Web

- **Emergency management resources:** [Using immersive simulation techniques to enhance disaster preparedness](#) and [Updated guidance for hospital incident command](#)
- **Newsletter:** *Quick Safety* Issue Four: [Preparing for active shooter situations](#)
- **Blog post:** *Ambulatory Buzz:* [Primary Care Medical Home Certification: The Three-Year Mark](#)

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