

CMS and Joint Commission Adopt 2012 *Life Safety Code*


After years of The Joint Commission advocating for this change, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will begin surveying to the 2012 version of the National Fire Protection Association's *Life Safety Code*^{**} as of **July 5, 2016**. The Joint Commission will follow suit as of that effective date.

The May 4, 2016, final rule[†] announcing CMS's decision requires hospitals to follow the NFPA 101[®] 2012 edition of the *Life Safety Code* as well as the NFPA 99[®] 2012 edition of the Health Care Facilities Code. While the rule adopts most of the proposals that CMS made in 2014, CMS removed a proposed requirement for hospitals to install smoke-purging systems in operating rooms. George Mills, MBA, FASHE, CEM, CHFM, CHSP, director, Department of Engineering, The Joint Commission, says the proposal was “unnecessary” and “prohibitively expensive.”

The final rule, among other things, states the following:

- The prohibition of roller latches will be limited to “doors to corridors, and to rooms containing flammable or combustible materials.”
- By the year 2028, buildings taller than 75 feet will be required to install automatic sprinkler systems.
- Facilities will be required to have a fire watch or evacuate if a fire sprinkler system is out of order for longer than 10 hours.
- For new construction only: Windowsills must not be higher than 36 inches above the floor.

This rule is applicable to hospitals, critical access hospitals, inpatient hospices, long-term care facilities, intermediate care facilities, ambulatory surgical centers, and other types of facilities. The Joint Commission expects to update the “Life Safety”

(LS) chapter for affected accreditation programs in the near future (details to be published in upcoming issues of *Perspectives*). Questions may be directed to The Joint Commission Department of Engineering at 630-792-5900. 

* Life Safety Code[®] is a registered trademark of the National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA.

[†] Federal Register. Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Fire Safety Requirements for Certain Health Care Facilities. May 4, 2016. Accessed May 13, 2016. <https://www.federalregister.gov/a/2016-10043>