



Regulatory Advisory

As a service to members, advisories are produced whenever there is a significant development that affects the job you do in your community.

CMS and The Joint Commission Define Installation Criteria of Alcohol-Based Hand Rub Dispensers

A Message to ASHE Members

While CMS and The Joint Commission are both permitting the installation of alcohol-based hand-rubs (ABHR) in egress corridors of healthcare facilities in accordance with NFPA's Life Safety Code[®], there have been numerous questions raised about the placement of the dispensers near electrical outlets and switches. This alert specifically relates to clarification of the term "adjacent" when placing dispensers near these electrical devices.

The Issue

In writing the ABHR Tentative Interim Amendment (TIA) for the NFPA's 2000 edition of the *Life Safety Code*, and subsequently the language in the 2006 edition of LSC, the crafters of the language were very clear in their intent to use a term that specifically meant "near or close" to an electrical outlet or switch and **not** to generate a specific dimension of measurement from the dispenser to the electrical device. This decision was based on the facts presented in the computer modeling; knowledge of the manner in which the ABHR give off gases; and the expert opinion of those professionals writing the Code. The objective of the language was to prohibit installing dispensers where they are touching or nearly touching an electrical device.

As the TIA is being applied in the field, surveyors and state officials have been requesting a precise hard-fast measurement to apply in determining compliance with the requirement of "shall not be directly adjacent to." The NFPA's Technical Committee on Health Care Occupancies has recently reinforced its position of not wanting to set an arbitrary measurement from the dispenser to an electrical switch or device, as there is no science to support any measurement other than the current language.

CMS Position

On February 19, 2007, ASHE interviewed Mayer Zimmerman, a senior Medicare official for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in order to ascertain for CMS's official position on the definition of "directly adjacent" as it applies to ABHR and electrical outlets and switches. Mr. Zimmerman unambiguously stated that there is no set measurement criterion from the dispenser to electrical outlets or switches and further stated that CMS had instructed its regional offices and surveyors to review the placement of these devices in strict accordance with the TIA language and not to establish arbitrary distance requirements. He provided the following guidance, which is in accordance with attached Survey and Certification Position Letter (June 2005):

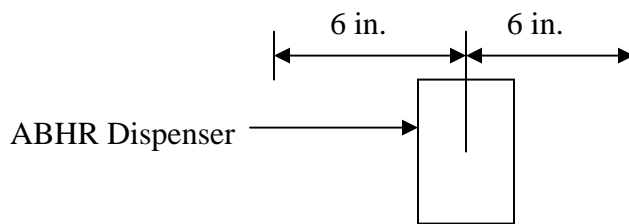
1. ABHR dispensers shall not be installed directly above an electrical outlet or switch. CMS surveyors will be looking at the spill cone of the dispenser.
2. Electrically charged devices shall not be directly adjacent to the ABHR dispensers. CMS surveyors are encouraged to review installations on an individual basis where there appears to be a potential fire hazard due to the individual installation.

The Joint Commission Position

In the January 2006 article published in the *Environment of Care*[®] News, Volume 9, Issue 1, The Joint Commission allows the installation ABHR product dispensers in egress corridors, provided that the following conditions are met:

1. The corridor width is 6 feet or greater, and dispensers are at least 4 feet apart.
2. The dispensers are not installed over or directly adjacent to electrical outlets and switches. Adjacent is defined as being no closer than 12 inches from the **center** of the dispenser to either side, i.e. 6 inches in either direction starting from the midpoint of the dispenser.
3. In locations with carpeted floor coverings dispensers installed directly over carpeted surfaces are permitted only in sprinklered smoke compartments.

The Joint Commission has established a specific measurement criterion for use by its survey team. In reading this criterion, ASHE urges you to carefully recognize the subtle nuance of item 2. This item establishes a measurement of 12 inches from the center of the ABHR dispenser to either side. So in fact, if the dispenser is 4 inches wide the edge of the electrical switch or outlet could be 4 inches away from the dispenser. (See diagram)



NFPA's Technical Committee on Health Care Occupancies Position:

At the Technical Committee's recent Report on Proposal meeting, the committee reaffirmed its position on the intent of the phrase "directly adjacent." A proposal was submitted to add the following language which was rejected during the proposal phase:

101-301 Log #10 SAF-HEA
(18.3.2.6 and 19.3.2.6)

Final Action: Reject

Revise to read:

Alcohol-based hand-rub dispensers shall be protected in accordance with 8.7.3, unless all of the following conditions are met:

(6) The dispensers shall not be installed over or within 12 in. ~~directly adjacent~~ to an ignition source.

Substantiation: The current wording provides no guidance for the enforcer or user. The 12 inches comes from the CMS guidelines and provides a more definitive enforceable number than directly adjacent.

Committee Meeting Action: Reject

Committee Statement: The technical committee does not know whether the submitter's recommended 12-in. criterion is the correct and necessary number. Without substantiation, the current text which prohibits placement directly adjacent to an ignition source better serves the *Code* user.

Thoroughly Review the Information before Installing or Relocating Dispensers

This Advisory provides all of the latest information on the placement of ABHR dispensers in egress corridors. Members are encouraged to review these positions with infection control prior to making any modifications in the placement of existing dispensers.

If there are apparent conflicts with these positions within your state, please alert ASHE so we can monitor the differences.

For questions or comments contact Douglas Erickson at derickson@aha.org or 312-422-3823.



Center for Medicaid and State Operations/Survey and Certification Group

Ref: S&C-05-33

DATE: June 9, 2005

TO: State Survey Agency Directors
State Fire Authorities

FROM: Director
Survey and Certification Group

SUBJECT: **Multiple Providers** - Hospitals, Ambulatory Surgical Centers, Nursing Homes, Religious Non-Medical Health Care Institutions, Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) Facilities, Critical Access Hospitals, Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded – Adoption of a New Fire Safety Amendment for the Use of Alcohol Based Hand Rubs (ABHRs)

Letter Summary

- This letter highlights the publication of an amendment to the 2000 Life Safety Code for certain health care facilities.
- The amendment, and our implementing administrative rule, permit Alcohol Based Hand Rubs (ABHRs) to be used in exit access corridors provided they meet certain requirements.
- The use of ABHRs must conform to state and local laws.
- The dispensers must be installed in such to minimize leaks and/or spills.
- The dispenser(s) must be installed to adequately prevent access by vulnerable populations.

The purpose of this memorandum is notify states and regional offices of the publication on March 25, 2005 in the *Federal Register* (Vol. 70, No. 57, Page 15229) of an interim final rule with a comment period entitled: "*Medicare and Medicaid Programs: Fire Safety Requirements for certain Health Care Facilities; Amendment.*" The 60-day comment period closed on May 24, 2005. We have attached a copy of the regulation to this memorandum.

Regulation Requirements:

- The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recently amended the 2000 edition of the Life Safety Code (LSC), which is adopted by reference in the Medicare and Medicaid fire safety regulations, to permit the installation of ABHR dispensers in exit access corridors of health care facilities. Previously, ABHRs have been permitted in patient rooms, but not in egress corridors, since they contain flammable materials and could block egress in a fire.
- ABHRs have become increasingly common as an infection control method. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports there are more than 2 million health care acquired infections per year. Many of the infections are transmitted because health care workers do not wash their hands or do so improperly or inadequately.
- An important aspect in getting health care workers to use ABHRs is their accessibility. The American Hospital Association commissioned a study to determine the safest method to place ABHRs in egress corridors. As a result of this study, the LSC was amended to permit their use under certain conditions as outlined below.

Installation:

- Where ABHR dispensers are installed in a corridor, the corridor shall have a minimum width of 6 ft (1.8m).
- The maximum individual dispenser fluid capacity shall be:
 - 0.3 gallons (1.2 liters) for dispensers in rooms, corridors, and areas open to corridors.
 - 0.5 gallons (2.0 liters) for dispensers in suites of rooms.
- The dispensers shall have a minimum horizontal spacing of 4 ft (1.2m) from each other.
- Not more than an aggregate 10 gallons (37.8 liters) of ABHR solution shall be in use in a single smoke compartment outside of a storage cabinet.
- Storage of quantities greater than 5 gallons (18.9 liters) in a single smoke compartment shall meet the requirements of NFPA 30, *Flammable and Combustible Liquid Code*.
- The dispensers shall not be installed over or directly adjacent to an ignition source.
- In locations with carpeted floor coverings, dispensers installed directly over carpeted surfaces shall be permitted only in sprinklered smoke compartments.

If you have any questions concerning this memorandum, please contact Mayer Zimmerman at 410-786-6839 or via E-mail at Mayer.Zimmerman@cms.hhs.gov.

Effective Date: This regulation was effective May 24, 2005. There is no phase-in period provided in the regulation. Please ensure that all staff are fully apprised of this information within 30 days.

Training: This information should be shared with all appropriate survey and certification staff, surveyors, their managers and state fire authorities and their staff.

/s/
Thomas E. Hamilton

cc: Survey and Certification Regional Office Management (G-5)

Attachment

Clarification on Alcohol-Based Hand Rubs (ABHR)

The Joint Commission's official stand on the use of alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) is described here. Use of ABHR is for topical bacteria only, not for gross soiling. Use of ABHR is not meant to replace hand cleansing.

ABHR Gel Product: Dispensers in Egress Corridors

The Joint Commission allows the installation of gel product dispensers in egress corridors, provided that the following conditions are met:

- The corridor width is 6 feet or greater, and dispensers are at least 4 feet apart.
- The dispensers are not installed over or directly adjacent to electrical outlets and switches. *Adjacent* is defined as being no closer than 12 inches from the center of the dispenser to either side.
- In locations with carpeted floor coverings, dispensers installed directly over carpeted

surfaces are permitted only in sprinklered smoke compartments.

ABHR Gel Product: Permissible Volume

- Each smoke compartment may contain a maximum aggregate of 10 gallons of ABHR gel product in dispensers and a maximum of 5 gallons in storage.
- The maximum individual dispenser fluid capacity is 1.2 liters for dispensers in rooms, corridors, and areas open to corridors.
- The maximum individual dispenser fluid capacity is 2.0 liters for dispensers in suites of rooms.

ABHR Foam Product: Permissible Location

Note that the preceding criteria do not include ABHR foam product in the corridors, which is not to be dispensed in egress corridors. ABHR foam product may

be used inside patient rooms and suites, provided that the dispensers are installed safely, as per the following:

- The dispensers are not installed over or directly adjacent to electrical outlets and switches. *Adjacent* is defined as being no closer than 12 inches from the center of the dispenser to either side.
- In locations with carpeted floor coverings, dispensers installed directly over carpeted surfaces are permitted only in sprinklered smoke compartments.

ABHR Foam Product: Permissible Volume

No studies have been conducted by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) or other related agencies to provide quantity guidance, so the Joint Commission would expect volumes to be the same as or less than those for ABHR gel product. EC

ASK ASHE:

Question

We have a question regarding placement of alcohol based hand rub dispensers in hallways and in some waiting areas. Although the criteria on horizontal spacing are so specific (4 feet apart), the installation over or directly adjacent to ignition sources is not so clear. Can you provide some direction and explanation for approach to placement?

Response

Distance between dispensers

The distance of 4 feet between dispensers is specific because this was part of the design used in the modeling study of flammability characteristics of the gels. A 'worst case scenario' included consideration of older hospitals that may have corridors as narrow as 4 feet. The model scenario was designed with possibility of dispensers being directly opposite one another in a four foot corridor.

Adjacency

Adjacency issues are less specific because there is no scientific evidence to support a specific distance.

Adjacent-and directly over an ignition source

Issue is just that - directly over - The dispenser should not be directly over the outlet so that gel will not drip into an outlet (or on plugs inserted into the outlet) - as a small spark may be created when unplugging a piece of equipment which is in the on mode).

Adjacent - and next to an ignition source.

Issue relates to flammable vapor given off from the gel. Because containers are not vented to the air - there is no concentration of flammable vapor (analogous to increased oxygen concentration around a patient oxygen mask)- so there really is no hazard created by installing a dispenser near a light switch or receptacle.