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Emergencies



Do you know what to do in an emergency? If it's night-time, who do you turn to for help? Faced with an accident or sudden illness, with fire or other alarms, it is vital you are up to date with the home's procedures and know who to contact for professional action. That way you will have the confidence to help and reassure residents who may be frightened and will rely on you to comfort and keep them safe.

EMERGENCY CARE IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT

Care homes must ensure that they meet the welfare and safety of residents, and the premises are both suitable and safe. *The Health & Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: No 9 Person centred care, No 12 Safe care and treatment, No 18 Staffing*

On call night and day

Emergencies can happen at any time of day or night. Knowing in advance who to contact and when is vital to a quick response. Having this information easily available and knowing where to find it really matters.

Many emergencies happen at night when fewer staff may be present and services may not be easy to reach. So at night it is particularly important that all staff are aware of the procedures to follow and who to inform. Some contact details for out of hours services will be different from those during the day.

At all times you must be able to find quickly the phone numbers of:

- ☛ senior staff
- ☛ emergency/medical services, including GP out of hours service
- ☛ maintenance and utility services
- ☛ relatives and nearest contacts of residents.

Evacuation and fire drills

There should be an evacuation plan and regular fire drills so moving people at any time of day or night is a well understood and rehearsed process. All staff should:

- ☛ understand and comply with the Fire Risk Assessment including the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for each person
- ☛ know when and how to call emergency services
- ☛ identify Designated Protected Areas, and when and how they are used
- ☛ identify when to carry out a full evacuation
- ☛ identify alternatives to using lifts
- ☛ know who is responsible for accounting for all residents, visitors and staff and checking everyone is safe.

Staff need to reassure residents and see that they are warm and comfortable, whatever happens.



FIRE DANGER

Always call emergency services as soon as the alarm is sounded rather than try to investigate the fire. An Inquiry into the fire at Rosepark Nursing Home, found that the lives of four residents could have been saved if emergency services had been called as soon as the fire alarm had sounded. *(Fatal Accident Inquiry – Rosepark Nursing Home 2010)*

Keynotes

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GOOD PRACTICE

When a carer heard rushing water, she raised the alarm and the emergency evacuation plan was put into action. Silver Court care home in East Grinstead had fallen victim to flash flooding. Carers calmly moved residents to the top of the home, gave them blankets and hot drinks to keep them warm, while the manager arranged for them to be moved into temporary accommodation. Within four days all residents were back together under one roof with their familiar carers. One resident said: "It was no problem at all. Every comfort and thought was put into it."

Hospital Emergency

When a resident has a fall, or other serious accident or a sudden change in wellbeing you should call for senior staff or medical advice. The person may need to go to hospital which can be a frightening and confusing experience. Ideally someone the person knows and trusts should go with them. Whoever goes with them will need the right information:

- ✎ a clear explanation of what happened
- ✎ a list of all medication, including herbal/non-prescriptive, and dosage
- ✎ GP or other consultant or specialist contact details
- ✎ problems with communication, such as poor sight, deafness, speech impediments or confusion
- ✎ whether the current emergency has affected their ability to communicate
- ✎ other health problems such as dementia, diabetes, heart disease, arthritis or allergies.

Going alone If no-one is available to accompany them it is essential to see that the above information is included. As well as identifying who they are, give the home's contact details and who to speak to, and the name and contact details of close family.

Staying in If it is likely they will need to stay in hospital, make sure they have everything to make them comfortable: their toiletries including spare pads where appropriate, dentures, spectacles and hearing aids if they use them, with something to keep them in, marked to prevent loss, plus a change of clothes and nightwear.

Who to tell

Whatever the emergency, always try to inform the next of kin or appropriate relative or friend so that they know what is happening and can understand whether and when a visit or any other support might be helpful.

RECOGNIZING THE CRISIS

An outbreak of flu hit Donegal. In one care home seven people died. The health authority (HIQA)'s report found failings in their emergency planning. Poor communication internally and with external professionals had led to delay in detecting the flu outbreak. The home had also failed to provide staff vaccinations or increase staff levels to meet the resulting care needs of residents. The home was required to update its emergency planning to protect against these failings in future. (HIQA Inspection Report 0368, Nazareth House, 2012)



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