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DQA Memo 13-023

To: [Nursing Homes](#)

NH 13

From: Juan Flores, Director
Bureau of Nursing Home Resident Care

Via: Otis Woods, Administrator
Division of Quality Assurance

Evacuation of Residents with Special Needs

The purpose of this memo is to share information and clarification in response to an actual situation where residents in bariatric beds felt abandoned during a documented emergency at a long term care facility.

Life Safety Code (LSC) requirements 18/19.7.1.1 include a written plan for the protection of all residents to assist safe evacuation in the event of an emergency. Additional LSC requirements 18/19.7.1.2 require the facility to conduct fire drills at unexpected and varying conditions at least quarterly on each shift. Staff members must understand the procedure and successfully participate in these drills to assist in a successful evacuation of residents regardless of ambulatory status or medical condition. Similarly, [F517](#) [CFR 483.75(m)(1)] requires facilities to “have detailed written plans and procedures to meet all potential emergencies and disasters, such as fire, severe weather, and missing residents.” The interpretive guidelines states, “The facility should tailor its disaster plan to its geographic location **and the types of residents it serves.**” (Emphasis added.)

Evacuation plans need to take into account residents who have special needs. This is especially true for residents residing in bariatric beds. Bariatric equipment is of special construction and dimension. Facility staff members need to know in advance how to operate special equipment so that evacuations can be completed safely in a drill or an actual emergency. Failure to account for residents with special needs can impede evacuation and places the health, safety and welfare of both resident(s) and staff(s) at risk.

If you have any questions, please contact the Regional Field Operations Director in your area.

Regional contact information is located at:

http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/rl_DSL/Contacts/reglmap.htm