



QUESTIONS FROM THE FIELD

Question: Can an electric blanket or heating pad be used in a long-term care facility?

Answer: Yes*

State regulations do not prohibit the use of electric blankets or heating pads. The Division of Regulation and Licensure, Engineering and Consultation Unit has provided the following guidance concerning the use of electric blankets:

- Must be UL labeled and maintained according to manufacturer's recommendations
- Resident must not be incontinent
- If the resident is confused, the controls must be modified so the resident cannot increase the temperature setting
- Staff must maintain close observation to assure comfort and safety

Medicare- and Medicaid-certified facilities must comply with federal regulations that specify the resident environment remain as free from accidents and hazards as possible and that each resident receives adequate supervision to prevent accidents. The intent of F-323 is that you identify hazards and risks, evaluate and analyze hazards and risks, and implement interventions to reduce hazards and risk. According to the State Operating Manual, *“The proper use of electric blankets and heating pads is essential to avoid thermal injuries. These items should not be tucked in or squeezed. Constriction can cause the internal wires to break. A resident should not go to sleep with an electric blanket or heating pad turned on. Manufacturer’s instructions for use should be followed closely. Injuries and deaths have been related to burns and fires related to the use of heating pads. Most deaths are attributable to heating pads that generated fires, but most injuries are burns from prolonged use or inappropriate temperature settings. Prolonged use on one area of the body can cause a severe burn, even when the heating pad is at a low temperature setting.”*

Dave’s Memo: I would encourage everyone to come up with a system to monitor the use of electric blankets or heating pads. Staff must closely observe, document, and care plan residents who use electric blankets to assure residents’ comfort and safety. Be sure that if a resident is confused, the blanket’s controls are modified to prevent the resident from increasing the temperature.

*http://health.mo.gov/seniors/nursinghomes/pdf/LTCBulletinWinter_2011.pdf

*<http://health.mo.gov/safety/ltcqa/questionsandanswers.php#no14>