

Solutions for Risk Management

Issues directly or indirectly affecting the senior living industry can change overnight. *Solutions for Risk Management* provides the latest news, updates, trends and risk management tips.

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Safe Navigation Through Winter

With the arrival of winter and the possibility for adverse weather conditions, a review of weather terms is advised. Since long term care requires staff to be present all the time, it is necessary for facilities and staff to prepare for adverse weather conditions.

- * **WATCH:** A watch is issued when significant weather precipitation is possible in the next 24 to 48 hours. It does not mean a sure thing but is meant to warn that hazardous winter weather could occur. Watches are issued for winter storms, heavy snow, or blizzards. A watch usually gives 12-36 hour advance notice of the onset of a winter weather condition.
- * **WARNING:** A warning is issued when winter precipitation that could lead to a threat to life or property is expected. A warning is the most serious of the winter messages and indicates that action should be taken immediately to get ready for the storm. Warnings are issued for winter storms, ice storms, heavy snow, blizzards, and heavy sleet that are imminent or very likely to occur.
- * **ADVISORY:** An advisory is issued for winter precipitation that is not expected to produce significant risks to life and/or property, but could still impact travel or other activities. Advisories are issues for a variety of winter conditions.
- * **WINTER STORM:** This term may refer to a combination of winter precipitation, including snow, sleet, freezing rain, etc.
- * **HEAVY SNOW:** This is determined on a state-to-state basis. Most states that experience frequent snowfall define heavy snow as four or more inches of accumulated snow in a 12-hour period or six or more inches accumulated in a 24-hour period.
- * **SLEET:** Sleet is rain drops that freeze into pellets of ice before reaching the ground. Sleet usually bounces when hitting a surface and does not stick to objects. However, it can accumulate and cause dangerous driving conditions.
- * **FREEZING RAIN:** Freezing rain is rain that falls onto a surface where the temperature is below freezing. This causes the rain to freeze on contact with trees, power lines, cars, and roads. This coating, or glaze of ice, causes serious travel problems even with small accumulations.
- * **ICE STORM:** An ice storm is a high-impact event caused by excessive accumulations of freezing rain on trees and power lines. Generally, a quarter-inch or more of ice is considered dangerous. However, this can vary depending on other factors.



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- * **BLIZZARD:** This life-threatening event is produced by a combination of falling or blowing snow and high winds, typically 35 mph or more, for a prolonged period of time. This combination can create potentially deadly travel conditions with impassable roads and zero visibilities.
- * **WIND CHILL:** Wind chill is determined by a combination of wind and temperature that serves as an estimate of how cold it actually feels to exposed human skin. Wind chill values below negative 19 degrees are considered dangerous. A warning is issued if wind chills below negative 35 degrees are expected.

During the winter months, facility leadership should encourage staff members to raise their weather and safe driving awareness and winterize their vehicles. Winterization should include a check of the battery, fluid levels, tire pressure, tread depth, brakes, hoses, belts, and wiper blade. It is recommended that gas tanks be maintained at least half-full to prevent fuel line freeze up. Headlights should be on whenever the windshield wipers are being used. Plenty of distance should be maintained between cars to allow for additional stopping time. Although roads may appear dry, black ice can be present, especially on bridges and overpasses.

While on the road, car trouble, slide-offs, or long traffic delays are not uncommon in bad weather. So, keep an emergency kit in the car that includes the following necessary items:

- Blankets, extra mittens, and hats
- Flashlight

Winter Fall Prevention

Snow, ice and frigid temperatures are heading our way. These types of conditions create an increase in falls for visitors, residents and staff. Extra vigilance is suggested for sidewalks, entrances and parking lots.

If you have a service contract for snow and ice removal, review with your contractor what you can expect for service prior to busy times of the day, as well as whether salting and actual ice removal are included. Do not forget to address all entrance and exit areas, too. Additionally, does your contractor have insurance coverage? If not, your insurance coverage could be at risk.

For the inside of the buildings, the use absorbent runners and wet floor signs can be of help. However, even these safety measures are known to present risks to falls. Be sure rugs or runners are of a sufficient weight and durability so they will not become a tripping liability. Have custodial staff be on extra watch for the needed cleanup of puddles that form after ice and snow have melted in indoor traffic areas.

When or if a fall occurs, the appropriate response is to get immediate medical attention in the form of first aid. If more is needed, call 9-1-1. Do NOT drive injured visitors, residents or even staff to the ER. Do not make assurances that medical bills will be covered or taken care of and report any events to your insurance agency.

Finally, be careful out there!



Germs...Colds...Flu...Infections! Are You Ready For Their Impending Arrival?

It's that time of year again! With cold, flu, and pneumonia season upon us it is the perfect time to re-educate your staff about the facility's infection prevention and control program. The desired outcome for an effective infection prevention and control program is to minimize the risk of exposure to, or development of, infection through the process of assessment, identification, immunization, intervention, prevention, and education.

When reviewing your facility's policy and procedure, ensure that the following components are included:

Resident Assessment and Reassessment: The facility monitors for the evidence of active infections to ensure appropriate actions are taken in a timely manner in order to prevent the spread of infections within the facility. This monitoring occurs as follows:

- During the pre-admission screening for the presence of infectious process to determine the ability to provide the appropriate care and services
- Ongoing monitoring of the resident's condition for the presence of any signs and symptoms of an infection
- Monitoring the signs and symptoms every shift until the infection is resolved or the completion of an antibiotic therapy

Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment: The facility ensures that appropriate systems are in place to prevent, manage and treat infections in order to prevent and reduce the rates of occurrence. Appropriate systems will be in place for the following:

- Preventive interventions for all residents, staff, volunteers, visitors, and other individuals who are providing services under a contractual arrangement
- Interventions to prevent infections and promote the resolution of active infections
- Interventions to prevent the spread of infections, including isolation procedures, cohorting-like infections, and limited or restricted visitor access during infectious outbreaks (i.e., flu season)
- Physician's orders for active treatment
- Immunization program
- Tuberculosis surveillance program
- Antibiotic stewardship program

Tracking and Surveillance Procedure: The facility develops a system for surveillance of all infections to identify any patterns and trends. Data will be collected from the following:

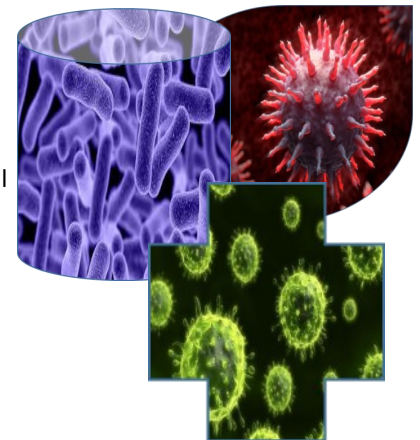
- System for surveillance and tracking of in-house infections
- System for surveillance and tracking of community-acquired infections
- System for surveillance of employee infections
- Review and analysis of laboratory, pharmacy surveillance, and tracking data
- Validation of medication administration practices related to infection control
- Review and analysis of infections including type and location
- Infection control outcome analysis reported to the appropriate committee
- Communicable diseases reported to local, state, and public health authorities, as required
- Process of collecting and documenting data on individual resident cases and comparing the collected data to standard written definitions (criteria) of infections

Care Plan Development: The facility develops and implements an acute or comprehensive care plan to promote the effective management of infectious processes.

- Develop an acute care plan at the onset of the infectious process
- Review the acute care plan every seven days, revise as warranted, and discontinue when the infection is resolved
- Develop a comprehensive care plan for recurrent or chronic infections; review and revise as warranted

Notification and Communication: The facility develops and implements systems which promote effective communication and ensures appropriate and timely notification to all of the following persons:

- Physician notification at the onset of the signs and symptoms of an infection
- Resident, family member or legal representative notification at the onset of the signs and symptoms of an infection
- Direct care staff
- Ancillary staff as warranted
- Visitors as warranted
- Agencies as required



Winter Driving Refresher

With winter approaching, now is a good opportunity for some refresher training concerning the hazards of driving in winter weather. Time spent reviewing winter defensive driving tips can assist in preventing a collision. All drivers can benefit from being reminded of the hazards and exposures of winter.

The number of collisions that occur during the season's first snowfall each year is amazing. A refresher can help all of us remember that ice and snow are slippery so we must slow down and increase our space cushion. To be proactive – review the hazards so that when the first inclement and/or snowy weather arrives, you will already be thinking about slowing down and increasing your space cushion (by at least one to two seconds). This is also a good time to review antilock brakes (ABS) operation and how to use them effectively (maintain firm pressure, do not pump the brakes, steer around hazards, and disregard the pulsing felt in the brake pedal).



Bridges freeze up before roads due to the cold air underneath them. Consider slowing down before the curve, not in the curve where an engine retardation or brake system may initiate a skid. Afternoon shadows may cause wet spots on roads to glaze over while sunny spots may create dry surfaces.

Winter also brings shorter days and limited visibility. Since days seem to be grayer, headlights need to be on more often and cleaned more frequently so the road and other drivers are more visible. Windshields need to be cleaned inside to remove film buildup that creates glare at night. Brake lights and other identification lights need to be kept clean to prevent dirt and salt buildup. Reflective tape on trucks and trailers need to be washed periodically to make them more visible.

Naturally, antifreeze levels and windshield washer fluid need to be checked, as well as the tires' air pressure since the ambient air will decrease the air pressure inside the vehicle's tires, making them run soft and less fuel efficient. Drivers should check tire tread depths to determine if new tires are necessary. Make sure to check your vehicle's chains before you need them, in order to repair broken links or cables and ensure they fit properly on the vehicle's tires.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration offers the following Safety TIPS for driving in Winter Conditions:

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Do not text or engage in any other activities that cause distracted driving.
- Drive slowly. It is harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface.
- Increase your following distance enough so that you will have plenty of time to stop for vehicles ahead of you.
- Know what kind of brakes your vehicle has and how to use them properly. In general, if you have antilock brakes, apply firm, continuous pressure. If you do not have antilock brakes, pump the brakes gently.
- If you find yourself in a skid, stay calm and ease your foot off the gas while carefully steering in the direction you want the front of your vehicle to go. This steering maneuver may require additional counter-steering before you can regain full control of the vehicle. Continue to stay off the pedals (gas and brake) until you are able to regain control of your vehicle.

During this winter season, slow down and follow these simple driving rules to help minimize your involvement in potential crash situations.



285 Cozzins Street, Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: 877.699.3988 ♦ Fax: 614.222.8224
Email: rms@rmsol.com
Website: www.rmsol.com
Visit us on LinkedIn!

Peggy Morrison, MSN, RN, BC, C.E.A.L., WCC
Business Development Director

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