

From: hfshazards
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To: NHS-LA@scotland.uk.com
Subject: Information Message IM/2020/015 - Fire risks for smokers using air mattresses at home

IRIC Incident Reporting & Investigation Centre

Reference: IM/2020/015
Subject: Fire risks for smokers using air mattresses at home

This information message is sent to draw the attention of Equipment Co-ordinators to information which may be relevant to the safety of equipment and facilities in NHS Boards and Local Authorities. Please find the information below

IRIC is highlighting the fire risks for smokers using an air mattress at home.

Background

Air mattresses are designed to prevent pressure sores for patients who spend long periods of time in bed. The risks of smoking in bed are well known but the consequences can be more severe when an air mattress is in use. A lit cigarette can cause heating and fire when it comes into contact with bedding materials, quickly burning down to the mattress surface. If a flame burns through the surface, air will escape under pressure causing the fire to burn faster.

In addition, bedbound patients often use oil-based emollients which increase the likelihood and severity of fire. Be aware that oxygen can saturate bedding and clothing and that fires will be exacerbated in the presence of oxygen. For further information, refer to our Information Message IM/2019/007, *Emollient cream build-up in fabric can lead to fire deaths*, issued 26 July 2019.

It is important that these fire risks are taken into account when assessing equipment requirements for smokers.

Recommendations

- Check whether the patient or anyone in their household is a smoker when considering issuing an air mattress for use at home.
- Assess the likelihood of the patient smoking in or near the bed.
- Ensure that smokers using air mattresses are aware that smoking in bed is a high risk activity and they should not:
 - smoke in a room whilst using an air mattress
 - burn candles in a room where oxygen or an air mattress is being used
 - place hot electrical items such as hairdryers or straighteners on an air mattress
 - use electric blankets whilst using oxygen or an air mattress
 - use matches or lighters in the vicinity of oxygen or an air mattress
- Ensure there are adequate arrangements for washing all bedding and air mattress covers as often as possible if oil based emollient creams are used
- Consider referring the patient / service user for a [Home Fire Safety Check from Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#)

As the Equipment Co-ordinator for your organisation, we recommend that you assess whether or not to forward this information to managers and staff within your area of responsibility who might benefit from being aware of it.

If you received this message directly from IRIC, email us at nss.irc@nhs.scot or phone 0131 275 7575 quoting the IM reference number. Alternatively, if you have received this message from someone in your own organisation, please direct all enquiries to them and they will liaise with IRIC as required.

Incident Reporting & Investigation Centre (IRIC)

Health Facilities Scotland

NHS National Services Scotland

Contact us:

IRIC Email nss.irc@nhs.scot

Helpline 0131 275 7575

<https://www.nss.nhs.scot/health-facilities/incidents-and-alerts/report-an-incident/>

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