



The Fire Triangle:

What you know can help prevent a fire.

Fire is an exothermic reaction produced when three distinct elements come together:

- Fuel
- Heat
- Oxygen

If any of these elements is missing, there is no fire.

The key to fire prevention, then, is to keep those elements a part. Unfortunately, in a hospital, that's not always easy.

All of the elements in the fire triangle exist in abundance in a hospital setting.

Fuel comes in the form of the many combustible materials essential to patient care—gloves, masks, gowns, linens, mattresses and other furniture, and alcohol-based prep or hand washing solutions, suction tubing, gauze, and drapes

Heat is also in abundance from sources like electrical equipment, electrocautery devices, lasers, and lights.

And **oxygen**, well there's sufficient oxygen in the ambient environment to support combustion. In a hospital, that's supplemented by supplied medical gases.

Fire Response is a Team Effort

Focusing on the "A" in RACE

There's no doubt about it. It takes a team of people to respond to a hospital fire. That's why it's so important to alert "the team" early in the fire situation. That's why "A" for "Alarm" is the second step in fire response.

In a healthcare setting, almost every employee can tell you what RACE means. It's the standard acronym for the basic steps in fire response in hospitals across the United States.

1. Rescue
2. Alarm
3. Contain
4. Extinguish or evacuate.

Unfortunately, experience has taught us that easy to remember doesn't always mean easy to follow. Implementing steps 1-4 in order is not intuitive. Many of us would jump from "rescue" to "extinguish" without any thought to what comes in between.

That's because we're not used to thinking of fire response as a team effort.

In a fire situation, sounding the alarm means alerting a variety of people to respond to the emergency--our co-workers, employees in other areas, PPD, Security, and the fire department.

To ensure that every member of the team is notified, we need to do three important things as a part of step 2, sound the alarm.

- **Call out "Green Grass."** Those simple words enlist your co-workers as members of your team.
- **Pull the fire alarm.** That activates the chimes and announcement so that others in the hospital can begin their response. It also sends PPD, Security, and the fire department to the scene
- **Call 911.** The call is a redundancy that *guarantees* that the fire department is on its way. Pulling the alarm should notify the fire department; the 911 call is the back up system.

Why is the team approach so important? Because what you do in the first one or two minutes of a fire is more important than what you do in the next one or two hours. You've got to act quickly because fire and smoke can spread quickly. The more hands you have—closing doors, moving objects from the corridor, grabbing

Hospital Labels Smoke Doors



In June, the Hospital will begin a project to label smoke doors throughout the facility. The goal: To make it easier for employees to identify features of the buildings' defend in place system. The blue labels will be affixed to the upper corner of each smoke door.

Smoke doors are important because, when closed, they significantly limit the passage of smoke from one area to another.

Last year, the Hospital labeled fire doors with bright red stickers in several buildings. Fire and smoke doors will be labeled in all hospital buildings as a part of this year's project.

Fire Extinguisher Classes

June 7

8:00-9:30 a.m.

or

3-4:30 p.m.

To register, call Shaunesia, 3-6023, or send an email to sqdavi2@email.uky.edu

Fire Response is a Team Effort (Continued from page 1.)

fire extinguishers—the better. And if you do have to evacuate the area, you will need an organized team to place patients on portable oxygen cylinders, shut off the medical gas, move patients from their rooms, and transport them to an area of refuge.

PPD and Security personnel respond to every fire alarm. PPD employees know the building and the fire alarm system. They are trained to begin fire response prior to the arrival of the fire department. Security officers respond to cordon off the area, if necessary; secure an elevator for fire department transport; and assist in moving visitors and others to an area of refuge.

The fire department responds to every single fire alarm that originates from the hospital. They're the fire fighting professionals, the ones that we count on to help PPD evaluate the situation, access the danger, and put the fire out. Although some hospital personnel have been trained to use fire extinguishers, the fire department must be called to the scene of every fire to ensure that it is properly extinguished and will not reignite.

Hospital Cell Phone Ban Lifted

Widespread use and few problems prompt change.

UK Hospital has lifted its ban on cell phones. If a diagnostic, treatment, or patient care unit has a specific reason to prohibit cell phone use, that area can bring its concerns to the Environment of Care Committee for review.

For years, hospitals throughout the United States have had some prohibition or another against cellular telephone use within their facilities. UK Hospital has been no exception. Since the 1990's, the Hospital has had a policy that prohibited cell phone use in many locations and has posted "No Cell Phone" signs in areas throughout the facility. The reason: Hospitals feared that cellular telephones might interfere with monitoring equipment or cause other medical equipment to malfunction.

Although the issue of whether cell phones can cause problems with medical equipment has been highly debated, there has been little convincing evidence of interference. In recent years, new digital technology and distinct frequencies have made the potential for interference even less likely. Add to that the fact that cell phones are known to be used—despite the policy—by faculty, employees, patients, and families without any documented problems and you've got good reason to lift the ban.

The truth is that a "No Cell Phone" policy has become unenforceable as cell phones have become more and more commonplace. They have become important communication tools, and hospitals have had to balance the risk with the benefits.

