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FYI MEMORANDUM

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POWER OUTAGES/EMERGENCY & DISASTER PLANS

Given the tragic events that have happened over the past few weeks and that we are rapidly approaching the season of unpredictable weather, we should all be thinking about having established plans for emergency situations, including power outages. It is important that staff be familiar with these plans -- during the past week, one client reported that during their annual certification survey, surveyors interviewed direct care staff about how they would care for residents during extended power outages.

I recently sent the following question to Susanne Thomas at the Health Department and would like to share her response with you.

Question: In the January 19, 2001 memo from Nancy Hofheimer .item "B" under general rules states that the measures necessary to assure a resident's health, safety, and comfort in the event of power outages should be recorded in the resident's medical record or Plan of Care. I have had two different interpretations from clients and need to know which one is correct. The first interpretation was that all residents are at risk and the care plan should routinely contain this information in the event that an extended power outage occurs. The second is that the Plan of Care would need to be documented and implemented when the extended power outage occurred. The facility has an appropriate plan that will be implemented, the question is simply whether or not the potential needs to be care planned or the care plan be revised when/if the event occurs.

Answer: The facility could do either depending on the needs of the resident. If treatment or care would be jeopardized by a power outage - the facility should probably care plan for a "potential" outage. An example might be a ventilator dependent resident. (Connie had a good response - It would be a little late to enter an action plan after the fact for this type of resident.) If, on the other hand, the resident's care needs would not be immediately jeopardized by a power outage (routine care could be provided around whatever "normal" arrangements the facility had planned for power outage) we are wondering why the facility would want to "routinely" care plan? However, they can of course - there is no regulation that says they can't.

CMS TELLS SURVEYORS TO LOOK CLOSELY AT RESIDENTS' DENTAL/ORAL HEALTH

Nursing homes must provide appropriate dental care to residents, or else risk deficiencies during state surveys. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) told surveyors September 21 to pay close attention to residents' dental health during a live Web cast and satellite conference. Surveyors must check residents' oral cavities for the condition of their teeth, gums, soft tissues, and any dentures or partials. What they see must match what nursing home staff documented on the Minimum Data Set (MDS). Staff should provide or at least offer dental care to every resident each morning and night, said Gregory Folse, DDS, a dental consultant with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. Nursing homes need to accurately assess a resident's dental and oral health in Sections K and L of the MDS, document the steps for dental care in a resident's care plan, and then implement that care, said Virginia Martin, MD, LDN, a Louisiana surveyor.