

Top Notch Evaluation and Life Saving Solutions

Life Safety Code Surveys

Background

Fire Safety is the foundation of protection programs to inhibit the cause of a fire that may result in injuries or losses. Ascellon, performs Fire Safety Surveys on behalf of The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in Long Term Care facilities nationwide. During these surveys our Life Safety Code (LSC) specialist evaluate the facility's structure, preventative maintenance, fire control features and overall safety.

Customer's Objective

CMS seeks to ensure that all states are following the survey process by independently monitoring survey determinations by state agencies. This overall oversight not only enhances the survey process but also prevents potentially hazardous outcomes. Ascellon assists CMS in this effort by:

1. Making observations and determinations of insufficient State Survey practices through identification of single or patterned presence of deficiencies.
2. Making observations and determinations that the State Survey practices are thorough and accurate. Successes can be measured by the number and severity of deficiencies uncovered.

Identifying the Problem

Though the Fire Safety evaluation and survey process has been modified to detect unsafe facility conditions, there is still a prevalence of non-compliance with the regulations due to the reluctance of facilities to correct problems that require substantial expenditures. Relatively small and inexpensive maintenance items in the facilities are easily

completed in-house. But egress issues continue to mount up. It is the wide spread fire control features such as fire alarms, complete automatic sprinkler system, and maintained hard surfaces that must be completed and repaired by outside contractors which can cost a provider thousands to tens of thousands to install and maintain. Naturally these financially larger ticket items are being identified as deficiencies and the increase in challenges to the survey process from the provider has increased.

Failing results for a provider on these Fire Safety features can lead to a Jeopardy tag being written in Life Safety Code which can have a monetary penalty for the provider as well as the cost of the repair for federal fire code compliance. Over the last four years Ascellon's Life Safety Code surveyors have written several Jeopardy tags and numerous fire alarm, sprinkler, and egress tags and have to date never lost a Life Safety Code Tag in a court decision or informal dispute resolution hearing (IDR) for these fire safety requirements.

Current Trends and the Future

It is expected that if the current trend continues for the Fire Safety survey process, the years ahead will pose much of the same issues. Financially larger ticket items will continue to be common findings revealing the need for better State building plan reviews in Health Care facilities. It is also expected that the amount of legal challenges will increase considering the cost of repairs could be equal to or greater than the legal cost to challenge it. This trend shows Ascellon and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS)



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the need for a controlled quality review process for the survey reports where experts in both Health and Fire Safety set a plan to prepare for the future and overcome these upcoming challenges.

An Active Solution

Ascellon's LSC team found that not all State surveyors were looking at preventative maintenance issues both above ceiling in ceiling assemblies and below fire/smoke walls and corridor doors and walls. Based on this finding, changes have been implemented in the State survey process to improve the review of preventative maintenance issues during State surveys. As a result of these changes, the Federal Survey Monitoring Process has begun to see a dramatic decrease in preventative maintenance issues in nursing homes over the last two years. This has been a clear indication that adjustments have been made to increase the safety of these facilities.



For More Information about Ascillon's Life Safety Code Survey Capabilities, Contact:

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