

Regulatory Advisory

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International Fire Code Sets Criteria for Aerosol Alcohol-Based Hand Rub Dispensers

June 6, 2007

A Message to ASHE Members:

On May 25 the International Code Council (ICC) approved a revision to the International Fire Code (IFC) allowing aerosol alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) in hospital corridors. This revision paves the way for state and local jurisdictions that had previously prohibited the use of aerosol ABHR, to now allow their usage.

The Revised Code:

The IFC revision limits the use of aerosol ABHR to:

- Level 1 aerosol dispensers with a maximum quantity of 18 ounces, and
- 10 gallons (1135 ounces) total maximum quantity of ABHR (liquid or aerosol) in a corridor per control area (smoke compartment).

Previous restrictions on the use of ABHR (liquid or aerosol) in corridors remain, including minimum corridor width, projection into the corridor, and prohibition of Level 2 and Level 3 aerosols. The revised language of this section of the IFC is included at the bottom of this Advisory.

Background

The 2006 edition of the IFC permitted the use of liquid ABHR based on the recommendation of the *ICC Ad Hoc Committee on the Use of Alcohol Hand Disinfectants in Healthcare Occupancies* comprised of fire marshals, building code officials, manufacturers, and hospital facility managers. The committee accepted ASHE's *Alcohol-Based Hand Rub Solution Fire Modeling Analysis Report* as evidence that liquid ABHR could be used safely in a hospital setting. Because the report did not address aerosol ABHR, the 2006 edition of the IFC prohibited the use of aerosol ABHR in corridors. To complete this evidence, the Consumer Specialty Products Association (CSPA) commissioned a study leading to the report *Alcohol Based Hand Sanitizer - Level 1 Aerosol Products*. This "missing piece of the puzzle" and their substantiation on the safe use of ABHR in hospitals gave the IFC sufficient confidence to accept the proposal allowing aerosol ABHR.

Unified Acceptance of Aerosol ABHR:

The IFC is now consistent with the Life Safety Code (NFPA 101) in allowing ABHR (liquid and aerosol) in hospital corridors. Both the Joint Commission and Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have allowed aerosol ABHR in corridors pending further research and evidence.

The End of the Road

This recent action by the ICC represents the end of the road on allowing ABHR to be installed in corridors of hospitals and nursing homes. This road began in 2002 when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the *Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings* which encouraged the use of ABHR to reduce the incidence of Healthcare Acquired Infections. In July 2003, ASHE/AHA and the CDC convened a national stakeholder meeting to address concerns from the fire safety community on allowing these products in hospital patient rooms and corridors. That meeting set the groundwork for clinicians, fire safety professionals, enforcing authorities, and hospital operational professionals to work together to assess and manage the fire risk from use of these products. This work led to revisions to both the Life Safety Code and International Fire Code and acceptance by the Joint Commission, CMS, and state and local fire marshals.

ASHE Recommendations:

- **Thoroughly review** the information below before installing or relocating ABHR dispensers. Review the most recent advisory on dispenser placement: *CMS and The Joint Commission Define Installation Criteria of Alcohol-Based Hand Rub Dispensers (March 21, 2007 ASHE Advisory)* ([March 21, 2007 ASHE Advisory](#))
- For further information on the Life Safety Code, Joint Commission, and CMS go to <http://www.ashe.org/ashe/codes/handrub/index.html>
- **Share this information** with your infection control professional, safety committee and with your state and local fire authority and building code department.

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Revised International Fire Code

Section 3405.5.1 Corridor installations. Where wall-mounted dispensers containing alcohol-based hand rubs are installed in corridors, they shall be in accordance with all of the following:

1. ~~Aerosol containers shall not be allowed in corridors~~ Level 2 and Level 3 aerosols containers shall not be allowed in corridors.
2. The maximum capacity of each Class I or II liquids dispenser shall be 41 ounces and the maximum capacity of each Level 1 aerosol dispenser shall be 18 ounces (.51 kg).
3. The maximum quantity allowed in a corridor within a control area shall be 10 gallons (37.85 L) of Class I or II liquids or 1135 ounces (32.2 kg) of Level 1 aerosols, or a combination of Class I or II liquids and Level 1 aerosols not to exceed, in total, the equivalent of 10 gallons (37.85 L) or 1135 oz (32.2 kg).
4. The minimum corridor width shall be 72 inches (1829 mm).
5. Projections into a corridor shall be in accordance with Section 1003.3.3.

Note – underlined text is added, strike out text is removed, from the current edition of the IFC