



ADVERTISEMENT

GUEST COLUMNS

## Life safety alert: Storage is prohibited in the means of egress

STAN SZPYTEK

SEPTEMBER 13, 2021

SHARE ▾



Stan Szpytek

As a Life Safety Consultant working directly with LTC providers around the country as well as with many state healthcare associations, I need to start this piece by being blunt and will get straight to the point.

**You cannot use the means of egress (hallways, exit paths and stairwells) in your facility to store the over-abundance of supplies you may have received for infection control measures including service corridors.**

Having toured several facilities recently while conducting Mock Life Safety Surveys, I have personally observed multiple instances of non-compliant storage within the means of egress that will automatically trigger a deficiency (K-211). Storage is required to be in a protected space that has a hazardous area designation in accordance with NFPA 101, The Life Safety Code (2012 edition- Chapter 7 unless modified by 18/19.2.2 through 18/19.2.11. 18.2.1, 19.2.1, 7.1.10.1). Storage rooms require higher levels of fire protection which includes fire-rated walls, ceilings and self-closing doors that should not be propped open.

ADVERTISEMENT

Simply using the rationale that your facility does not have any space in your protected storage rooms for these new infection control supplies (boxes of masks, gowns, sanitizers, etc.) is not an acceptable reason to place storage of any type in your hallways or stairwells; even if it is confined to one side or beneath an open landing. Besides representing a deficiency, the presence of storage within the means of egress constitutes a safety hazard, risk exposure and may compromise your team's ability to effectively evacuate the building during an emergency.

Storage problems are not new to the built environment but the need and presence of infection control equipment and supplies have clearly magnified the issue. One strategy to consider is having your procurement team work closely with the logistics groups at your vendors to develop supply chain schedules to positively address this important matter. Alternate delivery schedules for IC supplies as well as other general supplies can be considered to help optimize the pipeline so a facility can manage storage practices in a safe and compliant manner.

Another solution may be to simply reorganize your storage rooms to accommodate equipment and supplies more efficiently. It is not uncommon to observe inefficient use of storage space within a facility. Of course, storage practices must always be mindful of required clearance zones around fire sprinkler heads (18 inches) and electrical equipment including circuit breaker boxes (36 inches). Where allowed by local codes and ordinances, obtaining portable storage containers that can be placed on the property can also provide temporary storage solutions.

Finally, a facility may want to reach out to their long-term care associations, purchasing groups or trade associations to see if they can provide perspective or direct support on this specific logistical matter. In consideration of other infectious disease outbreaks or supply chain issues that may be on the horizon, in-house storage and supply chain management should be part of your facility's emergency preparedness program.

*Stan Szpytek is the president of the national consulting firm, Fire and Life Safety, Inc. based in Mesa, Arizona, and is the Life Safety/Disaster Planning Consultant for the Arizona Health Care Association, California Association of Health Facilities (CAHF), Utah Health Care Association and American Assisted Living Nurses Association (AALNA). Szpytek is a former deputy fire chief and fire marshal with more than 40 years of experience in life safety compliance and emergency preparedness. For more information, visit [www.FLSafety.org](http://www.FLSafety.org) or e-mail Szpytek at [Firemarshal10@aol.com](mailto:Firemarshal10@aol.com).*

*The opinions expressed in McKnight's Long-Term Care News guest submissions are the author's and are not necessarily those of McKnight's Long-Term Care News or its editors.*

---

**FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY**

**LIFE SAFETY CODE**

**STORAGE**

ADVERTISEMENT

---

## TOP STORIES

[VIEW ALL >](#)

---

**NEWS**

Coordinator turnover threatens to cut into reimbursement: survey

---

**NEWS**

Federal guidance on vaccine mandate 'can't come soon enough': expert

---

**NEWS**

ADVERTISEMENT

## EDITORS' PICKS

---

[VIEW ALL >](#)

### No resting on laurels

BY JAMES M. BERKLAN



### On the road again, and looking to give you a lift

BY KIMBERLY MARSELAS



### For providers, this isn't just a game

BY JOHN O'CONNOR





NEWS

Parkinson: 'Stupidity,' not private equity, dogging some nursing home purchases



**PRINT NEWS**

60 seconds with ... Alicia DiGiammarino

---

ADVERTISEMENT



[NEWS](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

[ABOUT US](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

[ADVERTISE](#)



Copyright © 2021 Haymarket Media, Inc. All Rights Reserved This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed in any form without prior authorization. Your use of this website constitutes acceptance of Haymarket Media's [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms & Conditions](#).