

Unusual Occurrences Reporting Requirement

Reportable “Unusual Occurrences”

Hospitals are required to notify CDPH immediately, via telephone, of the following:

1. Any discontinuance or disruption of services;
2. Upon the threat of a walkout of a substantial number of employees; or
3. An earthquake, fire, power outage or other calamity that causes damage to the facility or threatens the safety or welfare of patients or clients.

[Title 22, California Code of Regulations, Sections 70746 (general acute care hospitals), 71544 (acute psychiatric hospitals)]

Title 22 also requires general acute care hospitals and acute psychiatric hospitals to report by phone any occurrence such as an epidemic outbreak, poisoning, fire, major accident, disaster, other catastrophe or unusual occurrence that threatens the welfare, safety, or health of patients, personnel, or visitors, as soon as reasonably practicable, to the local health officer and to CDPH. The hospital must furnish other pertinent information related to the occurrence as may be requested by the local health officer or CDPH. [Title 22, California Code of Regulations, Sections 70737 (general acute care hospital) and 71535 (acute psychiatric hospital)].

Exactly which types of incidents constitute an “unusual occurrence” has not been further clarified by CDPH. CDPH is aware that its employees as well as hospital employees have inconsistent interpretations of this requirement. CDPH has indicated that the following events should be reported as unusual occurrences:

1. Sentinel events as defined by the Joint Commission, even if the hospital does not report the event to The Joint Commission. (See CHA’s Consent Manual, chapter 19, regarding sentinel events.)
2. A patient death that occurs while a patient is restrained or in seclusion for behavior management.
3. Incidents that are covered by the news media.
4. An emergency or disaster-related occurrence that results in a patient evacuation, transfer, or discharge [All Facilities Letter 17-06 (Mar. 13, 2017)].
5. Public Safety Power Shutoff power outages [All Facilities Letter 18-48 (Nov. 13, 2018)].
6. However, CDPH has not promulgated regulations regarding these informal interpretations.

How to Report

During normal business hours, the hospital should contact the local CDPH Licensing and Certification district office it customarily works with. For after-hours reporting, or if the local district office is non-operational due to an emergency or disaster, hospitals in Los Angeles County should contact the Los Angeles County Operator at (213) 974-1234 and ask the operator to notify the on-call Health Facilities Inspection Division supervisor. Hospitals outside Los Angeles County should contact the CDPH duty officer at (916) 328-3605.

The hospital should document that notification was made.