

Alabama Department of Public Health, Technical Services Unit

Cooking Appliances in Resident Bedrooms

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Question: Is it acceptable for residents to have hot plates, griddles or similar cooking appliances in their bedrooms?

Answer: No. It is incredible that there are family members who think this is a good idea. Actually, if a resident is capable of taking care of such affairs without supervision, he/she probably does not qualify for Medicare/Medicaid benefits for residing in a nursing home. Actual regulatory requirements are as follows -

1. The 2000 Edition of NFPA 101, Life Safety Code, as well as the 1985 Edition, prohibits the use of portable heaters in resident sleeping areas, as follows:

18.7.8 Portable Space-Heating Devices.

Portable space-heating devices shall be prohibited in all health care occupancies.

Portable cooking devices under consideration have the same inherent risks as portable heaters. a) Both of them place a large demand on the electrical circuit, increasing the risk of electrical problems that can result in fires. b) Both have very hot parts that are a significant burn hazard to residents and staff. c) Both get hot enough to ignite combustible materials present in bedrooms, such as clothing and other fabrics.

2. Fumes or smoke produced by improper cooking are likely to set off the building fire alarm system via the smoke detectors.

3. Potential problems complying with Federal health care regulations include the following:

Regulation text of F323: "The facility must ensure that the resident environment remains as free of accident hazards as is possible." The use of such cooking devices presents a high risk of injury to residents and staff.

Regulation text of F371: "The facility must store, prepare, distribute, and serve food under sanitary conditions." The facility could be held responsible for how the resident handles and prepares food. No facility could adequately supervise the storage and preparation of food, nor the cleaning of cooking utensils and appliances.

Regulation text of F372: "The facility must dispose of garbage and refuse properly."

Regulation text of F456: "The facility must provide a safe, functional, sanitary, and comfortable environment for residents, staff and the public."

4. Alabama licensure rule for nursing facilities, paragraph 420-5-10.05(3)(ff), states that residents do not have the right to retain and use personal possessions when such "would infringe upon the rights or health and safety of other residents." The odors and safety issues should negate any resident's rights issues.