

FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive establishes the responsibilities and procedures for the reporting of fire incidents in VHA facilities and covered non-VA facilities.
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** Major changes include:
 - a. Adds a requirement that fires reported by an Issue Brief must also be reported online.
 - b. Removes the requirement to maintain a separate Facility Fire Incident Log in addition to online reporting of fire incidents.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** VHA Directive 7712, VHA Directive 7701, and VHA Handbook 7701.02.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N) is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions related to this directive may be directed to the Office of Occupational Safety, Health, and GEMS Programs (10NA8) at 202-632-7888.
- 5. RESCISSION:** VHA Directive 2009-039, dated August 25, 2009, is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of August 2022. This VHA directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

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FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive establishes the policy and procedures on the reporting of fire incidents in VHA facilities and covered non-VA facilities. **AUTHORITY:** Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C) 7301(b).

2. BACKGROUND

a. Fire safety for patients, staff, and visitors is a major priority at all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities. This includes non-VA facilities in which services are provided to Veterans under a VA program. Reporting fire incidents raises the level of transparency in the organization and promotes a culture of safety. Recording and tracking of fire incidents is important to understand the magnitude of the fire problem in any organization. Trends can be identified that may not be evident at local facilities and the documentation and analysis of incidents can provide rationale for implementing prevention activities. In addition, the VA periodically reports its fire incident experiences to external organizations on an as-needed basis.

b. This directive requires reporting of all reportable fire incidents at VA-owned facilities and VA-leased facilities that are operated by VHA. In addition, it is the responsibility of VA staff (e.g., program staff, safety staff) to report incidents in covered non-VA facilities for which the staff become aware. When VA staff is made aware of a fire at a non-VA facility, the information known about the incident is to be reported in the same manner as a fire at a VA-owned or VA-leased facility. **NOTE:** *It is understood that for a fire at a non-VA facility, VA staff might not have all of the information required to fully complete the fire incident reporting form.*

3. DEFINITIONS

a. **Covered Non-VA Facility.** A covered non-VA facility is a facility, which is not VA-owned or leased, that provides services to Veterans under a VA program. Covered non-VA facilities include, but are not limited to:

(1) Non-VA facilities that provide overnight sleeping accommodations for Veterans through a VA program, including, but not limited to, facilities falling under the Community Nursing Home Program, Community Residential Care Program (including medical foster homes), Domiciliaries, Homeless (Grant) and Per Diem Facilities, Outpatient Clinics, and one- and two-family dwellings where home health care is provided to Veterans.

(2) Non-VA clinics and physician offices that are contracted by VA to provide medical treatment for Veterans.

b. **Non-Reportable Incident:** A non-reportable incident is an incident that does not meet the definition of a reportable fire incident. In the absence of a reportable fire incident, non-reportable incidents include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Activation of a fire alarm or detection system.
- (2) Discharge of a portable or fixed fire extinguishing device or system.
- (3) A response by a fire department (including in-house VA fire departments) to a suspected fire incident, rescue, or hazardous condition.
- (4) An electrical short that generates smoke or odor.
- (5) Equipment overheating that generates smoke or odor.

c. **Reportable Fire Incident.** A reportable fire incident is an ignition resulting in an uncontrolled flame of any size, or an explosion, in which the flame or explosion results in the following:

- (1) Any casualty, whether an injury or fatality, to any patient, employee, visitor, or contactor; or
- (2) Any damage to real or personal property (for example, a small trash can fire, or an ignition of patient bed linen or clothing).

4. POLICY

It is VHA policy that all reportable fire incidents occurring in VA-owned facilities, VA-leased facilities that are operated by VHA, as well as, known reportable fire incidents occurring in covered non-VA facilities, must be reported.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for ensuring a safe and functional environment for patients, employees, visitors, and contractors.

b. **Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.** The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management, or designee, is responsible for overseeing the development of VHA policy and programs to address safety and health issues.

c. **Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Administrative Operations.** The Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Administrative Operations, or designee, is responsible for overseeing the implementation of VHA policy and programs to address safety and health issues.

d. **Director, Office of Occupational Safety, Health, and GEMS Programs.** The Director of the Office of Occupational Safety, Health, and GEMS Programs, or designee, is responsible for analyzing fire incident data and developing prevention activities, if necessary.

e. **Director, Center for Engineering and Occupational Safety and Health (CEOSH)**. The CEOSH Director, or designee, is responsible for ensuring that an online fire incident reporting form and database are developed and maintained.

f. **Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director**. The VISN Director, or designee, is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the procedures specified in paragraph 6 are verified during the Annual Workplace Evaluation (AWE).

g. **VHA Facility Director**. The VHA facility Director, or designee, is responsible for ensuring that each reportable fire incident at the facility, as well as each reportable fire incident at a covered non-VA facility of which the Director or VHA facility staff become aware, is addressed in accordance with the procedures listed in paragraph 6 below.

6. PROCEDURES

a. **Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Notification**. The VISN office must be notified by Email, as soon as possible, but not later than 24 hours after the reportable fire incident, when any of the following occur:

(1) The incident results in any casualties to patients, employees, or other individuals.

(2) Property damage is expected to exceed \$10,000 in value.

(3) The incident generates media coverage.

NOTE: *If the incident results in severe injuries to any person, notification is required to the VISN and the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management immediately (as soon as local conditions safely permit notification). If the VISN has more stringent requirements than this directive, the more stringent requirements must be followed in addition to the requirements of this directive.*

b. **Employee Injuries**. Any employee casualties must be reported in accordance with Federal and VA occupational safety and health requirements. ***NOTE:*** *See Title 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1960 subpart I, 29 CFR 1904, and VHA Directive 7701, Comprehensive Occupational Safety and Health Program.*

c. **Patient Involvement**. Fire incidents involving patients must be handled in accordance with VA patient safety requirements. ***NOTE:*** *Contact the facility or VISN Patient Safety Representative for the current patient safety requirements.*

d. **Fires Reported by Issue Brief**. All reportable fire incidents reported via Issue Brief must also be reported online in accordance with paragraph 6.f. below.

e. **Reporting by Local Authorities**. Local authorities (i.e., local fire department) responding to the incident must be requested to report the incident in accordance with local protocol via the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) <https://nfirs.fema.gov/>, if they participate in this national reporting system.

f. **Online Reporting of All Reportable Incidents.** An online fire incident report must be completed within 30 days of the incident for any reportable fire incident. The report forms are located on the "Report a Fire Incident" page of the Center for Engineering and Occupational Safety and Health (CEOSH) Web site, <http://vaww.ceosh.med.va.gov/>. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA Web site not available to the public.*

(1) **Casualties.** Reporting of casualties (injuries and fatalities) is required for all reportable fire incidents.

(2) **Damage.** For all VHA-owned and VHA-leased facilities, the damage estimate must include real property damage to any VA-owned structure, building equipment, and building systems, as well as property damage to VA-owned building contents. Damage to non-VA-owned real property (e.g., damage to the lessor's structure, building equipment, and building systems) cannot be included in any damage totals. In addition, damage to patient, employee, or contractor-owned personal property cannot be included in any damage totals reported. In determining the estimated property damage costs, replacement costs of the property using like kind and quality are to be included, plus any cost associated with clean up and repair. In facilities that are not VA-owned or VA-leased, it is not necessary to provide an estimate of real property damage or personal property damage.

(3) Additional information, including occupancy type, fire protection system operation, ignition source, etc. must also to be reported, as applicable.

7. REFERENCES

- a. Title 29 CFR 1960, Subpart I.
- b. VHA Directive 7701, Comprehensive Occupational Safety and Health Program.
- c. VHA Handbook 7701.02, Fire Department Services at VA Medical Centers and Domiciliaries.