

## **NFPA 2015 Life Safety Code Revisions**

Amy Carpenter represented the Pioneer Network's Life Safety Code Task Force at the NFPA Technical Committee on Healthcare Occupancies meeting on June 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, to promote the Task Force's second round of proposals to make changes for the 2015 edition of the Life Safety Code. **We are happy to report that all of the proposals that we submitted were approved by the committee!** The next step in the process is a final vote at the NFPA annual meeting. Special thanks to Rob Mayer of the Hulda B. and Maurice L. Rothschild Foundation for supporting this work!

Here is a summary of the proposals and what they mean:

### **Disguising doors**

Doors in the means of egress, that are permitted to be locked, may be disguised with murals, as long as a defined set of criteria is met.

**What this means:** Exit doors in memory support, or other care settings, may now be painted with a mural, which may prevent elopement attempts and reduce agitation for those who see an exit and really want to use it. Now, the entire door and frame, except the actual panic bar/lever handle may be painted to look like a bookcase or a nature scene. While the panic bar may not be painted, it can be worked into the design such that it has low-contrast to the surrounding area and blends in. All staff members will need to be trained and operate the door in the event of an emergency, and the activation of the door must be part of the fire safety plan.

### **Corridor width**

Corridors in new nursing homes, within smoke compartments that house 30 or fewer residents, will be permitted to be 6 feet wide.

**What this means:** in small household settings with short corridors or the required corridor areas around open common rooms, these corridors may now be designed to be 6 feet wide instead of the currently required 8 feet wide. This should result in a better, less-institutional look. Keep in mind, though, that if you go with the 6 foot wide corridors, you will not be permitted to place furniture in the hallway, unless you create an alcove.

**Related items that were accepted:** when you have a 6 foot wide corridor, each door leaf for cross corridor doors in a smoke barrier may provide a minimum of 32 inches clearance (such as with two 34 inch doors), instead of the currently required 41 1/2 inch clearance (two 44 inch doors).

## **Clarification of limited cooking**

The intent of this change was to expressly allow certain cooking activities, such as rehabilitation cooking for PT/OT, activity cooking ( baking cookies) and portable cooking (like cooking omelets to order at breakfast time, similar to what is done in hotels.) The original scope of language for this was much more involved and set out to create two new classifications for cooking activities. However, the committee felt that both PT/OT/activity cooking and limited duration of cooking table side, using portable cooking equipment, was already permitted under the limited cooking provision already in the code.

Working with various committee members, we instead turned our attention to the language in the annex for this section. We realized that there was a disconnect between the code language and the explanatory information in the annex that has been causing trouble for some designers, providers and code officials when trying to apply this section.

The language was changed in four ways. The changes are subtle, yet powerful.

First, we removed the term "small appliances" and replaced it with just "appliances". This will allow stoves and ovens that are used in PT/OT and activity cooking. The main code language still requires these appliances to be residential appliances, so there is still a safety factor.

Next, we corrected an error. For some reason, the annex only spoke about re-heating of food. Some code officials pointed to this to say that you couldn't prepare food from scratch, like baking cookies or making an omelet. To remedy this, we added the permission to use these appliances for "reheating, cooking or food preparation". This brings the annex back in line with the code text, which talks about limited cooking or re-heating.

We then added electric skillets to the partial list of example appliances that can be used. The intent is not to create a laundry list of every acceptable appliance but, by adding electric skillets, we make clear the ability to use them for portable cooking.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, we added the following: "Limited quantities of butter, oil or cooking spray may be used." This is important to allow food to be cooked, without it sticking to the pan, but also to prevent code officials from requiring a full commercial hood anytime someone wants to make a grilled cheese sandwich. The committee agreed that there are thresholds for grease laden vapors and there are other permitted conditions, in assembly occupancies for example, where limited cooking arrangements are not required to have hoods, flues, or the like.