



**STATE OF IOWA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

STATE FIRE MARSHAL DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Iowa Healthcare Providers

FROM: Kyle R. Gorsh, *Special Agent in Charge*

DATE: October 27, 2020

SUBJ: Outdoor Visitation Requirements due to COVID

Health care facilities across the nation have been negatively impacted by COVID-19, with outbreaks causing high rates of infection, morbidity, and mortality. The vulnerable nature of health care facility populations have required aggressive efforts to limit COVID-19 exposure and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within these facilities.

Per the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), outdoor visitation is preferred and can also be conducted in a manner that reduces the risk of transmission, while also protecting residents, family members, and staff from fire risks. Facilities should create easily accessible and safe outdoor spaces for visitation. Some options would include: courtyards, patios, parking lots, or temporary structures, including but not limited to tents.

The State Fire Marshal Division will require the following minimum standards to ensure a safe environment is in place to protect all participants during visitations at health care facilities:

- 1.) All exit pathways located outside the facility shall be maintained clear and unobstructed at all times.
- 2.) Temporary structures and portable heating devices need to be at least five feet from the building and all required exit doors.
- 3.) Electric heaters should be plugged directly into the wall outlet. If an extension cord is absolutely necessary, use the shortest possible heavy-duty cord of 14-gauge wire or larger. Always check and follow any manufacturer's instructions pertaining to the use of extension cords.
- 4.) Fire extinguishers shall be provided when portable heating devices are in use.
- 5.) Nothing can be stored within 3 feet of portable heating devices.
- 6.) Smoking is prohibited unless in approved designated smoking areas.
- 7.) A basic site plan is required showing the exits and location of the requested temporary structures. Distances from the temporary structures to the building and all exit paths shall be provided.

All exterior temporary structures and requests to use portable space heaters in outdoor meeting places must have State Fire Marshal Approval. Requests shall be sent to Kyle Gorsh at gorsh@dps.state.ia.us and Ljerka Vasiljevic at vasiljev@dps.state.ia.us