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SENIOR CARE FACILITY SAFETY FEATURES

Designing Safety Elements Within Senior Care Facilities

Whether your project is new construction or a renovation, cost is rarely a primary consideration for healthcare facilities managers when it comes to improving safety in their facilities.

We find that more often, families are choosing facilities that not only prioritize community but make safety features and access control high priorities. Thus creating the goal of designers to create innovative, inviting spaces that allow residents to engage with one another in areas that are safe and secure.

INCORPORATING SAFETY INTO THE DESIGN OF SENIOR CARE FACILITIES

Companies are focused on access control, meaning monitoring who is coming and going from different areas within the facilities. Depending on the level of care, certain areas within the facility may need more monitoring capabilities than others. One method of doing this is by designing nurses' stations to have better visibility of the rooms and of the residents. Additionally,

resident-specific monitoring can now be mobile. Instead of only providing stationary pull cords where required by code, wireless pendants can be worn by residents to ensure that they can always call for help whether they are near a pull cord or not.

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HOW DESIGN ELEMENTS HELP WITH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Facility managers should consider wayfinding elements that help residents and visitors navigate the building and egress out in an emergency. These elements could include colored pathways on floors or clear directional signs on walls. Designers should think beyond the safety codes and consider how the building will actually be used and not just what is required by code. It's also important to include staff and residents as part of the design process because it can help drive the best possible design that meets code requirements while still ensuring the unique needs of the facility are met.



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING FOR SAFETY

Designers must consider that senior care facility residents are active adults. So it is important to design for aging in place and for those that many want to reside in a more active community. Technology has allowed us to better monitor residents who are not under 24/7 supervised care, without impacting their daily lives. Examples include beds that detect and report incontinence and front door wellness check sensors that notify staff if a resident has not opened their door that day.

FOLLOWING SAFETY STANDARDS

Code compliance is always a must. Designing for the health, safety and wellbeing of the residents means also providing a wonderful place to reside. Each jurisdiction and licensing arm has their code requirements, so we meet with these entities early in the design process to ensure that your team fully understands their specific requirements. Typically, senior care facilities will be adhering to the International Building Code and NFPA 101. Make sure to understand whether the facility will be publicly or privately funded, as this can impact licensing requirements.



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Alli Mallory AIA is an Associate Principal with HED. She can be reached at amallory@hed.design.

As a senior project architect, Alli is extremely well-versed in all aspects of senior housing design. Her experience is all encompassing, allowing her to understand the challenges of multidisciplinary teams, bring simplicity and efficiency to the project, and guide the project through the technical and creative aspects.