

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Fire Safety: TAKE FIRE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WITH ALCOHOL HAND RUBS

Those alcohol hand gels are a great infection control tool, but they might also prove to be a fire hazard if you keep them in hallways used as an exit route in case of a blaze. That's the warning sounded by **Raymond Forsell**, clinical engineer with the **University of Vermont** technical services program, based on fire studies he's conducted on some of the alcohol-based hand hygiene products. Forsell found that the products tested produced a lot of black smoke and a fair amount of fire.

"So placing the products in egress corridors could increase the fuel load in case of a fire," he cautions. In Forsell's view, it'd be OK to place the dispensers containing the alcohol gel in a patient's room or a patient suite where staff can at least close the door and confine the fire to the room.

Forsell notes that fire codes require facilities to maintain a minimal fuel load in the corridors in order to provide a safe exit. "Facilities should, however, check with their local or state fire marshal's office for their interpretation of the fire codes," he tells **Eli**.

In addition, the American Society for Health Care Engineering is conducting more definitive studies of the alcohol hand rubs so nursing homes can look at the outcomes of those studies, Forsell suggests.