ARC® Facilities

Special Report:
Technology Tips for Taking the Sting out of Hospital Surveys

Introduction

From the Windy City to the Big Apple, hospital facility directors all dread accreditation surveys which are conducted every three years. **Survey preparation is critically important as hospitals are complex and constantly changing. For facility directors, administrators and staff, it's all-hands-on deck.**

A day in the life of a hospital facility director is rarely predictable and precise. It's 8+ hours of problem solving – relying on knowledge and the ability to perform based on rehearsal and familiarity with best practices.

Activity and action can go from 0 to 60 in just seconds in the event of an emergency repair, a fire, flood, an active shooter or some other calamity. Everyday incidents like locked circuit boxes, generator fails and phone system crashes require immediate attention, too.

There's rarely time to reflect. Facility managers are seen as walking encyclopedias of building knowledge among administrators, department heads, patients and contractors.

All this knowledge, knowhow and experience is put to the test during a survey.

1st Step: Gain Control

The first 90 minutes of a survey can often set the tone for the week. A successful document review lets the surveyor know your team is competent and thorough.

The Joint Commission's **Life Safety & Environment of Care Document List and Review Tool** is a useful resource for facility managers to make sure they are prepared to provide each of these documents promptly in the order they are requested. Quickly providing these documents is appreciated by surveyors and sets the tone for a successful survey.

Throughout the year, these binders are constantly updated with new documents. Out of date documents should be removed regularly, ensuring surveyors are only looking at the most current documents.

Facility managers should have repair tickets, work orders, **Interim Life Safety Measures** (ILSMs) and other written evidence to show that they have taken the required actions and that equipment is working properly.

A good best practice to ensure a smooth survey is for facility directors to open the binder to exactly the page requested when providing documents to the surveyor. **Precision is the key to a successful survey – especially when it comes to documentation**.

"**The facilities manager plays a leading role in a Joint Commission–accredited organization's compliance with Environment of Care® (EC) and Life Safety (LS) standards**," said Herman A. McKenzie, MBA, CHSP, acting director, Department of Engineering in a blog posted by The Joint Commission.

Do it right – the first time

A surveyor might say, "We want to see documentation for this standard." The facility person gets the binder, opens the binder to the right page, then puts the binder in front of the surveyor, without actually giving the binder to the surveyor.

In the days, weeks and months before the survey and the document review session, admins spend hours making copies of documents like the maintenance logs for critical equipment. These photocopies are inserted in the binders.

Most agree that maintaining binders is laborious and mind-numbing.

For the survey, **facility managers need 100% confidence that compliance binders are organized, prioritized and sanitized**. This confidence helps set the tone for a successful survey.

10 Tips for Successful Document Review, Survey Preparation and Follow-Up

1 Conduct robust mock internal surveys.

2 Post notices about upcoming surveys in breakrooms.

3 Check the binders. Compare them to the Document Review Tool. Are logs and other info up to date?

4 Take notes during the survey. Write down surveyors' questions or requests.

5 Have a planned survey route ready. This isn't the time to improvise.

6 Delegate an advance team to make sure no extinguishers, medical gas shut off valves, egress paths, electrical panels or other items are blocked by patient beds or chairs.

7 If deficiencies are reported, document corrections.

8 Schedule a post-survey team meeting.

9 Think about improving communication, customer service and project management skills.

10 Remember that the surveyors are people just doing their jobs. Treat them with kindness and respect.

Having a bad survey can be costly, damaging to the hospital's reputation, and negatively affect morale. But it's certainly not the end of the world. Hospitals are given time to make and record corrections. Lessons are learned and improvements are made.

In a post-survey review session, ask teams, "**What can we do better next time to raise the standard of care in our hospital while streamlining our procedures, processes and protocol?**"

The Problem with Paper

Ironically, the **COVID-19 pandemic is helping drive the need for hospitals to go digital to minimize multiple contacts with paper,** but many hospitals still use binders filled with compliance documents, completed repair reports, inspection logs and other information which must be shared with surveyors.

Paper presents several risks, including excessive handling, potential damage from water and fire, the time-consuming task of tracking and adding more paper files to the binders and the potential loss of information.

"**We have worked to integrate technology to avoid a room full of blueprints, binders, cd's, manuals**," said Mark Reed, Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital. "**We have leveraged systems such as ARC Facilities to store all of this information in one central database that is accessible online and offline. This has made it easy for our staff in the field to look up information while working on a device and reduced PM completion time. It also helps to maintain institutional knowledge so when someone leaves the organization the information is still retained**."

Relieving Stress with Technology
Automation = Fewer Mistakes = Less Duplication of Efforts

App-based technology solutions incorporating artificial intelligence and machine learning are a part of daily life in many industries. A rideshare app, for example, is highly complex on the inside, but a breeze for consumers to use.

No one should need formal training to use software. Most facilities management solutions are under-utilized because they're too complicated. **Today's mobile apps allow users to access complex information through simple user interfaces**. Why should it be different for facilities teams?

App features like automated workflow reminders are perfect for hospital facility managers because their work and the safety of patients depend on meeting daily deadlines like servicing equipment and conducting regular inspections.

"In the world of maintenance, I need to get as much work done correctly, safely and as quickly as possible. If I can reduce the amount of time spent looking for information, I can achieve that," said John Crouch, Director of Facilities AdventHealth Wesley Chapel, Wesley Chapel, FL.

With information stored in the cloud, all information related to a piece of equipment or a device is available with a single search. Documents are integrated and visible across all departments.

Powerful Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology makes it possible to search thousands of construction documents or operating manuals in seconds.

Over the years many healthcare facilities have digitized the maintenance and inspection reports on equipment. However, there has never been a good way to connect these documents efficiently to support a survey.

Cloud and mobile technology available today can help hospital facility directors improve productivity, minimize contact with paper and provide critical building data to all those who need it anywhere, anytime.

Three Steps
Towards Transformation

1
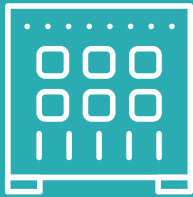
Automate and digitize maintenance and inspection reports on all machinery and equipment. This is important since this information is a critical part of the Physical Environment of Care chapters. **Digitizing this process allows facility directors to manage the maintenance and inspection process efficiently** throughout the year instead of scrambling before a survey.

Technology today will allow technicians to set up notifications to proactively manage inspection schedules. **The best tools will update compliance documentation automatically as inspections are logged**. This simplifies one of the biggest challenges in preparing the supporting documentation for surveys, which is consistent and timely inspections and documentation.

2

Leverage digital documentation requirements to organize information. Accreditation organizations do make the survey documentation available in digital format. This will allow facility directors to connect the requisite documents from the Physical Environment of Care directly to the survey requirements.

Technology today will allow facility directors to interconnect this information so survey documents can be updated in real time. Here again technology can proactively warn users of documentation that is overdue.

3
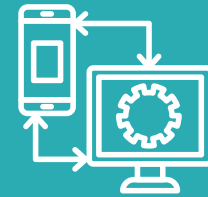
Make sure facilities teams have this data accessible on a mobile, cloud-based platform. Today's environment has many people working remotely, traveling and working across multiple office locations, and dealing with the time pressure created by reduced staff. **Mobile access helps to maintain visibility and track progress**. Today's mobile technology will allow technicians to view, attach, connect and share survey support documentation as required with a few swipes and taps.

The Future –
Smooth Surveys, Better Processes, Less Risk

Administrators and technicians spend a significant amount of time making photocopies which are then reviewed by directors and managers. Is there anything more tedious and tiresome than going over paperwork again and again? **Wouldn't we rather have technicians working on equipment than paperwork?**

Hospital facility directors are in a strong position to suggest productivity-enhancing technology solutions to decision-makers when factors such as risk mitigation, operational streamlining and overall safety are weighed.

Remember, the next survey, mock or actual is just around the corner. **Now's the time to be better prepared with the power of technology at hand**.

▶ **Take a quick look at how we help streamline compliance documentation**

To find out how ARC Facilities can help you, <u>request a demo</u> today.

or send an email to

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