

Blog Post

Florida Nursing Home Deaths Have Ripple Effects for Facilities Statewide

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Hurricane Irma's wrath knocked out power to much of Florida. At one South Florida senior rehabilitation center left in the dark, the generator was not powerful enough to sustain the air conditioning system, and a portable cooling system malfunctioned. Indoor temperatures swelled, leading to the deaths of eight patients before the facility was evacuated. An additional three patients passed away subsequent to the evacuation.

Now the deaths are having repercussions beyond the patients and the family members who suffered. Florida Governor Rick Scott and members of the Florida Legislature are seeking regulatory changes to prevent another such tragedy. Three days after the patients' deaths, Governor Scott ordered state agency leaders to issue emergency administrative rules mandating that by mid-November, all nursing homes and assisted living facilities must obtain a generator and the appropriate amount of fuel to sustain operations, including air-conditioning systems that can maintain temperatures of 80 degrees or lower, for at least 96 hours following the loss of electrical power.

Legislators are also proposing more permanent statutory solutions. In one bill filed by Florida State Senator Lauren Book (D-Plantation), state law would require nursing homes and assisted living facilities to have a "fully operational emergency power

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source” and enough fuel to run that emergency power source for at least five days. We expect that the Legislature will consider similar statutory changes when it convenes its regular session in January 2018.

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