



Practice Briefs

Myths vs. Facts regarding use of Alcohol-based Hand Rub (ABHR)

We cannot have ABHR in our facility because it is carpeted. – Myth. In general, as long as your facility has fire sprinklers, you may have ABHR dispensers in your facility according to Chapter 18 and 19 of NFPA 101 Life Safety Code 2012 (18.3.2.6 and 19.3.2.6)¹. Adhere to guidance (see same reference) regarding placement of dispensers and product quantity. The local authority having jurisdiction (e.g., Fire Marshall) should be consulted for questions.

We received a citation for ABHR, so we cannot have it in our facility. – Myth. In our experience, we understand that many citations for use of ABHR stem from healthcare worker lack of ability to cite or show proper use of ABHR. Ensure that facilities policies, education and training address hand washing as well as use of ABHR. Training and education should be offered upon hire (i.e., before start of work in the facility) and repeated annually. Training resources are listed below in the references.

We are limited to the amount of ABHR we can have in a smoke compartment. – Fact. According to NFPA 101 Life Safety Code 2012, “Not more than an aggregate 10 gallons of alcohol-based hand rub solution or 1135 oz. of Level 1 aerosols...shall be in use outside a storage cabinet in a single smoke compartment,” 18.3.2.6 and 19.3.2.6.

If the facility is near the allotted maximum, consider limiting the quantity of ABHR per dispenser. Half liter dispensers and 500 mL bags of ABHR solution are available. Those facilities which require additional dispensers can use this method to make ABHR available in more locations. Fire-safe storage cabinets should be used when storage of ABHR is needed. The local authority having jurisdiction (e.g., Fire Marshall) should be consulted for questions.

We have too many electrical outlets and switches, limiting where we can put ABHR. – Fact. However, over time, requirements have changed and make compliance easier to achieve. See NFPA 101 life safety code 2012 items 18.3.2.6 and 19.3.2.6, number 8.

Dispensers shall not be installed in the following locations:

- a) Above an ignition source within a 1 inch horizontal distance from each side of the ignition source
- b) To the side of an ignition source within a 1 inch horizontal distance from the ignition source
- c) Beneath an ignition source within a 1 inch vertical distance from the ignition source.

The local authority having jurisdiction (e.g., Fire Marshall) should be consulted for questions.

Reference:

1. NFPA 101 life safety code, 2012. (2011). Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association.

Consult this guidance document and associated protocol for more information on use of ABHRs:

Guideline for hand hygiene in health-care settings: recommendations of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee and the HICPAC/SHEA/APIC/ODSS Hand Hygiene Task Force. (2002). Atlanta, GA: Epidemiology Program Office, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5116a1.htm> Accessed 7/25/17.

Hand Hygiene Training Resources:

APIC Guide to Hand Hygiene Programs for Infection Prevention (2015). It can be downloaded at <https://apic.org/Professional-Practice/Implementation-guides>

World Health Organization, Tools for Hand Hygiene training and education. (n.d.). Retrieved July 28, 2017, from http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/tools/training_education/en/

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