



Health & Safety Alert #13-4-02

Bed Safety

There is a risk of suffocation and strangulation in bed for certain individuals depending on bed type, bed accessories, and bed positioning.

- Individuals who are fully dependent on staff for positioning, whose movements are restricted, who may suffer a seizure, or who may suffer a hypoglycemic episode in bed are at risk for obstruction of their airways by entrapment in bed structures.
- Examples of entrapment (regular bed mattress and waterbed):
 - Wedging between mattress and wall.
 - Wedging between mattress and bed frame, headboard, footboard.
 - Entrapment between mattress and adjacent furniture.
 - Strangulation between bed railings.
 - Entrapment between portable bed rails and mattress.
- Example of breathing obstruction due to position:
 - Suffocation on waterbed mattress (unable to move self from face down position on waterbed mattress).
- What to do:
 - Survey positioning of bed in relation to wall and other furniture to decrease likelihood of wedging between mattress and wall or other furniture.
 - Ensure good fit of mattress to bed frame, headboard and footboard (alternative is to remove headboard and footboard).
 - Avoid use of bed rails when possible; defined perimeter mattress is an alternative to bed rails.
 - Avoid use of waterbeds for individuals who are at risk of airway obstruction; individuals who choose to sleep in a waterbed, either directly or through their guardian, should be apprised of and agree in writing to the risks associated with this choice.

Responsible staff including, but not limited to, Service and Support Coordinators should ensure that potential safety issues are addressed in *all* settings and avoid these hazards, which can be fatal.

Please share this alert with staff providing services to individuals in your facility/county, as well as health care staff, physical and occupational therapy staff and managers.

For questions or comments regarding the above Alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

Reference: USCPSC Release #99-175

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