



2021 Direct Supply[®] Resident Health & Safety Survey Findings



Safety Above All: Survey Reveals Resident Falls & Infectious Disease are Top Priority in Senior Living Facilities

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a new health risk to Senior Living, but it is far from the only safety issue administrators face today. The senior population remains vulnerable to other infectious diseases as well as isolation, loneliness, and the continued risk of slips, trips, and falls. In addition, as the pandemic raged on, staffing at Senior Living facilities of all types took a hit¹, which only complicated administrative efforts to maintain a safe, healthy environment for residents.

In response to the crisis, administrators placed more focus on safety, compliance, and preventive measures against COVID-19 infection. However, some aspects of resident safety and health sit lower on the list of priorities than perhaps they should. As the following survey results show, Senior Living facilities of all types have made radical changes to fortify their buildings against COVID, but may not be ready to face a rise in other persistent, ongoing safety issues that threaten their resident populations.

THE SURVEY

In June of 2021, Direct Supply commissioned an independent survey to create understanding around how Senior Living facility administrators have responded to the crisis. Through the survey questions, we sought to understand how their perspectives and practices regarding safety have changed, what they have in common, and where they diverge.

Since the survey was conducted, the pandemic has continued to evolve as vaccines and boosters become more readily available, vaccine mandates are announced, and new variants emerge. The concerns and priorities of Senior Living administrators may change as well.

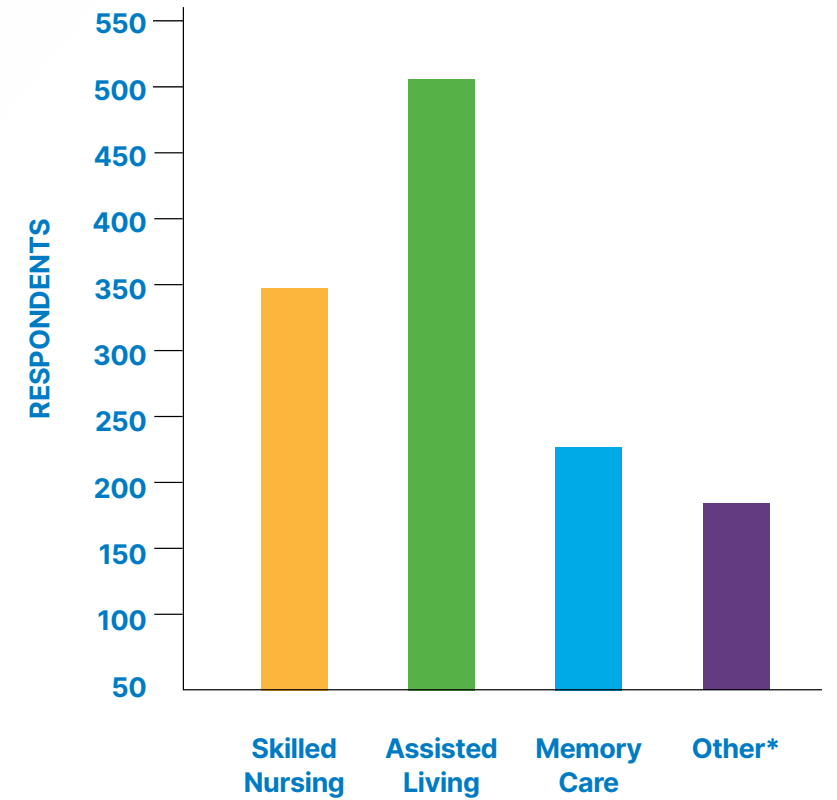
OUR OBJECTIVE

At Direct Supply, we strive to provide cutting-edge safety solutions that help mitigate risk and improve quality of life. Our purpose with this survey was to procure a timely, vivid snapshot of the emerging perspectives and practices of safety across the industry.

These survey answers were submitted in June of 2021. The rapidly shifting landscape of senior care may have caused priorities to change, even in the months between the survey and this report. However, this document may serve as a foundation upon which Senior Living professionals can make informed choices as to how to better serve their residents through increased safety measures that mitigate threats beyond COVID-19.

SURVEY FUNDAMENTALS

This survey was designed by Direct Supply and conducted independently by Qualtrics. Surveys were given electronically from June 9 - June 29, 2021. There were 1,262 total respondents, and participants were limited to administrators of Senior Living facilities, shown at right.



*Including CCRC, Independent Living and other Senior Housing

WHAT WE ASKED

The design of the question set was developed with specific objectives in mind: to provide benchmarks for Administrators, to reveal safety trends and drivers, to provide insight to suppliers to the industry, and to gain insight from the expertise of the respondents.

The question set covers 6 basic topics:

- Resident Safety
- Concern Over OSHA and CMS Citations
- Indoor Air Quality
- Infection Prevention and Control
- PPE Policies and Procurement
- Screening and Education

¹<https://www.mcknights.com/blogs/guest-columns/long-term-cares-impending-doom-staffing-shortages/>



RESIDENT SAFETY

As a Priority

In the wake of the pandemic, survey results regarding the priority of resident safety were dramatic but unsurprising.

When asked to name their top priority:

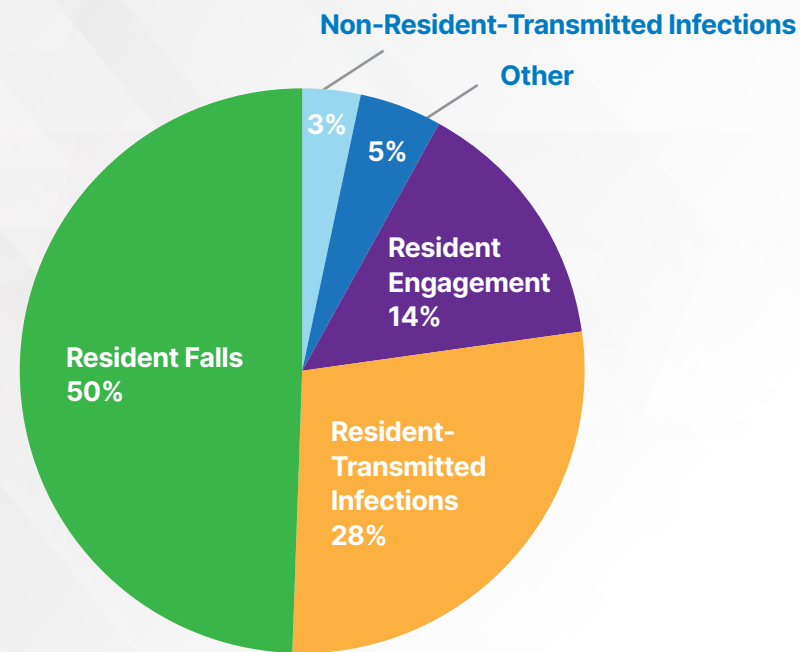
- 80% of Administrators identified resident safety as their top concern
- 19% listed resident safety as their second or third main concern
- <1% did not list safety among their key concerns

Level of Importance

When we asked Administrators to rate the change of importance of resident safety in the six months since December 2020, **more than half of Administrators said resident safety had increased in importance during the time period.** 43% of respondents said there was no change in priority, and less than half of one percent said resident safety was less important than in December of 2020.

The Top Five Resident Safety Issues

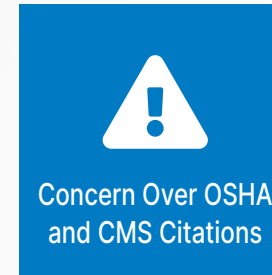
Even in the midst of a pandemic, resident falls reign as the number one safety priority for administrators. Over 50% of polled administrators are more concerned than ever about resident safety, and 50% also believe that falls are their number one issue. Resident-transmitted infections were found to be the second most common concern.



TAKEAWAY: Falls themselves have not been as fatal to residents as the COVID-19 crisis². However, falls consistently lead to other health risks, including greater vulnerability to infectious diseases like COVID-19³. This increased risk may contribute to the abundance of concern administrators have about falls.

²<https://www.aarp.org/ppi/issues/caregiving/info-2020/nursing-home-covid-dashboard.html>

³<https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-08-03/another-pandemic-harm-seniors-may-have-higher-risk-of-falling>



CONCERN OVER OSHA AND CMS CITATIONS

Increased OSHA scrutiny due to the Emergency Temporary Standard has resulted in concern about the possibility of citations.

However, data also showed that this concern was much more prominent in Skilled Nursing than in either Assisted Living or Memory Care facilities. 29% of the Skilled Nursing Administrators were very concerned about OSHA citations and 45% were very concerned about CMS citations.

Comparatively, only 13% of the Memory Care Administrators were very concerned about OSHA citations and only 17% were very concerned about CMS citations.

TAKEAWAY: The industry as a whole is quite aware and concerned about increased regulatory scrutiny, although considerably higher in facility types that are regulated by CMS. At the time of the survey, the OSHA ETS for Healthcare (June 2021) was in effect but vaccine mandates had not yet been announced. Since the survey was conducted, OSHA and CMS have continued to release additional regulatory requirements, including vaccine mandates.



INDOOR AIR QUALITY

On the topic of air quality, the survey revealed that Administrators' perceptions of their facilities' overall air quality is better than those published in independent research.

78% of respondents subjectively rated their air quality as excellent or good. However, an independent journal article⁴ indicates that up to 81% of Senior Living spaces have inadequate levels of ventilation.

This disparity between perception and reality may lead to greater health risks to residents⁵, as well as increased facility costs. For instance, poor IAQ may cause or contribute to a resident's removal to acute care or hospital admission. Resident removals are costly and interrupt the resident's care plan while increasing the risk of hospital-acquired adverse events, such as drug-resistant infections, which the resident may inadvertently introduce to the Senior Living facility upon their return.

In practice, facilities can help achieve consistent and optimal IAQ with thorough inspections, installation of new technologies and ongoing maintenance of current systems. Something as basic as replacing filters can help safeguard resident health and quality of life.

TAKEAWAY: The majority of respondents rated their air quality as excellent or good, but research and the number of COVID-19 outbreaks in Senior Living indicate that may not be the case⁶.

Administrators should ensure they are following best practices and regulations. This may include properly maintaining HVAC systems, installing better filters and implementing technologies such as ionization, UV-C and portable air purifiers. By doing so, administrators can help improve the health and wellbeing of their residents and staff.

⁴Adequate indoor air quality in nursing homes: An unmet medical need (Reddy et al., 2020)

⁵<https://www.mcknights.com/news/indoor-pollutants-imperil-snf-residents-researchers/>

⁶Adequate indoor air quality in nursing homes: An unmet medical need (Reddy et al., 2020)



Infection Prevention and Control

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

According to the CDC³, “A strong infection prevention and control (IPC) program is critical to protect both residents and healthcare personnel (HCP).” Survey results indicate that this message appears to have taken root in the industry: 94.8% of Administrators have infection prevention and control plans in place for their facility. Plans include protocols for high-touch surfaces, including resident rooms, common areas, food preparation areas and staff rooms.

Unsurprisingly given that COVID-19 is proven to be transmitted in the air, **60.5% of all Administrators ranked airborne transmission as the highest risk.** Contact transmission follows in a distant second position, surface-based and water-based transmissions are perceived to present significantly less risk at the moment.

Early in the pandemic, COVID-19 mitigation strategies included surfaces, but the disease model has evolved. Surface transmission is possible, but it is much less frequent than first thought. As a result, Administrators are turning to air purifying technologies such as UV lighting, ionization or simply increasing the MERV rating on filters for existing systems.

TAKEAWAY: Most facilities have a plan in place and are taking meaningful action steps to help prevent infection. As the pandemic has progressed, however, COVID-19 mitigation strategies have evolved. Administrators are turning to alternative technologies to prevent airborne transmission as well as upgrading current systems. A multi-pronged approach is being adopted to prevent and control infection.



PPE Policies and Procurement

PPE: POLICIES AND PROCUREMENT

We all remember the demand for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items back when the pandemic began, and it's highly probable that lack of equipment contributed significantly to undesirable outcomes. The novelty of the pandemic put a strain on the limits of PPE inventory and left both healthcare staff and their prospective residents wanting.

However, given the time to restock and rethink PPE policy and inventory, most facilities are now more confident in their ability to meet PPE demand. 91.2% of Administrators have a policy in place that ensures sufficient PPE inventory on hand to satisfy requirements set by local health or other government entities. This is consistent across all building types.

Moreover, 96% of Administrators have PPE usage policies, purchasing practices and training in accordance with the CDC's conventional use standard, which is their recommended standard for use in periods of unconstrained supply. This is consistent across all building types.

Finally, 92% of Administrators have a method of informing staff of transmission-based precautions that are in place for a specific resident as well as the PPE required for interactions with that resident and feel their methods are working well. Again, this is consistent across all building types.

TAKEAWAY: With more inventory in place, a stable supply chain and multiple suppliers, most Senior Living facilities are confident they can meet or exceed regulations and will be sufficiently prepared with PPE in the event of another health crisis. An established relationship with a dedicated vendor can help facilities react more quickly in times of need.



Screening and Education

SCREENING AND EDUCATION

Due to the persistence of COVID-19 infection rates, staff screening for symptoms of infection has continued in some form in 97% of facilities. Screening techniques include building entrance screening, contact tracing and quarantine policies, and daily manual temperature checks. Screening methodology and frequency for visitors are very similar to staff.

Staff education in the wake of the pandemic has been robust. Facilities are using a variety of methods to train staff to ensure ongoing education and compliance around OSHA, CMS requirements, and CDC guidance for infection prevention and control.

TOP FIVE TRAINING METHODS



In addition, survey respondents wrote in a variety of their own educational methods for staff, including:

- Memos and updates in break areas and common spaces
- Televisions with infection prevention programming throughout the facility
- Web-based Learning Management System (LMS)
- CMS-targeted training
- Shift change/manager meetings
- Newsletters
- Posters and weekly updates on any new infection control protocols for staff, residents and visitors

TAKEAWAY: Some form of screening upon entry to a facility is still a standard practice throughout the industry for both staff and visitors. Staff education has been robust and is communicated through a variety of methods.

In Summary

As this survey shows, most facilities have implemented new safety procedures to protect their residents from COVID-19. However, there continue to be many risks and challenges present to current residents that Administrators struggle to overcome. As staffing shortages continue to place strain on facilities, Administrators need to find new, consistent, and more efficient ways to increase resident health and safety across all areas.

Take your health and safety temperature

Read through each of the following statements. If you agree with the statement, place a check in the corresponding box.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want my facility to be fully compliant with CMS regulations, but I struggle to keep on top of all inspections and tasks associated with compliance. | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to know how my indoor air quality can be even better to reduce the risk of infectious disease in my facility. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to find a way to better manage my maintenance, repair, and compliance efforts in order to mitigate risk and improve daily operations in my facility. | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to find trusted, vetted professionals to help me with maintenance and repairs in my facility, but I don't have the time. |

If you checked any of the boxes above, here are some resources for you to consider:

- Head to our blog at DirectSupply.com to find more insights and information that can spark new ideas to better your facility.
- Call an account manager at 800-667-3880 to discuss TELS® Building Services, a maintenance and repair solution created to reduce hassle for busy Senior Living Maintenance Directors.
- Head to TELS.net to learn more about TELS Platform, Direct Supply's innovative software solution that helps Senior Living facilities handle daily maintenance and repair operations as well as complex projects and industry compliance requirements.

