



Jonathan Rosenfeld's Nursing Homes Abuse Blog

Nursing Home Patient Dies After Clothes Ignite While Smoking

By **Jonathan Rosenfeld** on August 04, 2011

Authorities are now investigating the smoking-related death of a 62-year-old man at a Chicago nursing home. The man identified as, Lawrence Lewis, suffered **first and second degree burns** to more than 20% of his body after his clothes caught fire while lighting a cigarette in an outdoor smoking area.

After struggling with another patient to extinguish the fire, a third person at the nursing home used a fire extinguisher to put out any remaining flames.

The Chicago Fire Department transferred Mr. Lewis to nearby Saint Frances Hospital in Evanston. Due to the severity of his burns, Mr. Lewis was eventually transferred to Loyola University Medical Center where he eventually died.

Special considerations for disabled nursing home patients who smoke

According to news reports of the incident, Ms. Lewis was a wheelchair-bound patient at the facility. Though I have no information about Mr. Lewis's physical abilities, nursing homes in general need to take special precautions when they care for physically (and mentally) impaired patients who smoke.

Obviously, the biggest threat smoking poses to a disabled person is their inability to

Jonathan Rosenfeld represents victims of nursing home abuse and neglect throughout the country. For more information please visit Nursing Homes Abuse Blog (www.nursinghomesabuseblog.com), Bed Sore FAQ (www.bedsorefaq.com) or call Jonathan directly at (888) 424-5757 (www.rosenfeldinjurylawyers.com).

move out of the way if an ember or match falls on them. Understanding this obvious problem, nursing homes have a duty to implement precautions for these vulnerable patients. While some precautions, such as smoking vests (a flame retardant fabric placed over patients laps), make good sense--- the most important prevention a nursing home can implement is to provide adequate supervision while patients are smoking.

Again, while I have no specific information about this incident, the lawyer in me wonders exactly where the staff were at the time this incident occurred. Having represented nursing home patients and families in [nursing home smoking cases](#), I find staff nowhere to be found when a patient needs their assistance. While we learn more about the specifics of this case, my thoughts and prayers are with this man's family.