

Advice to DMEs regarding new VA requirements

In March 2018, the Veterans Health Administration issued a Patient Safety Alert mandating the use of thermal shut-off devices (also known as firebreaks, fire stop valves or fire safety valves) in all its home oxygen patients' installations. The VA will be incorporating new requirements into all DME contracts for home oxygen.

KEY POINTS OF PATIENT SAFETY ALERT

- The VA's Patient Safety Alert requires that thermal fuses (firebreaks) are fitted to all home oxygen patients' installations – unless there is a clinical reason for not doing so
- The Patient Safety Alert applies to all patients, not just those deemed to be at 'high risk'
- Two thermal fuses must be fitted per patient installation
- In the case of portable devices, the requirement only applies to those with a continuous flow
- Following the Patient Safety Alert, all DME providers will be responsible to report home oxygen fires to the local VA medical center and must provide specific information about the fire
- Any unidirectional thermal fuses must be replaced with bidirectional versions at the next scheduled visit or sooner (unless the unidirectional is designed so it cannot be fitted in the wrong orientation, if it has a thread or bayonet for example)

- DMEs' contracts must be amended within six months of the Patient Safety Alert to reflect this change

ADVICE TO DMEs

- Contact your local VA medical center or VISN (Veterans Integrated Service Network) for details of contract changes
- Visit www.firebreaks.info for more information about thermal fuses and installation
- Contact your local distributor for information about thermal fuse installation kits

The VA requirement at a glance

- Two thermal fuses per patient installation
- All unidirectional thermal fuses replaced
- DME contracts changed by October 2018

*For more information visit www.firebreaks.info

Warning

Users should read the detailed instructions before installing a firebreak. As with all medical equipment, attempting to use or install the device without a thorough understanding of its operation and limitations may result in patient or user injury.

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