

As Harry Sees It

Contributed by Harry Moore

PROLOGUE

The late Harry Moore was a dedicated lifetime member of the ACIA from 1956 until his death in April, 2008. He held RCI #512 Division II-Building and Division III-Mechanical certifications which he kept current until his death. During his tenure, Harry wrote many articles of interest for The Inspector Magazine, as well as a book on Schoolhouse Inspecting. Prior to his death, Harry graciously assigned all rights to his writings to the ACIA. In honor of that generous donation, we will be reprising some of Harry's insightful articles in upcoming issues of The Inspector. His writings remain topical and timely in these times of economic uncertainty. This article was first published in 1997.

WHY HOSPITALS REQUIRE SPECIAL ATTENTION

Hospitals must be as earthquake resistant as can be built. There is no such thing as an earthquake proof building. However, they can be made to withstand terrific shocks without collapsing or crushing helpless people. Sanitation systems should all stay connected. All emergency systems must have a redundancy factor to allow them to operate under extreme conditions. Many of these systems must fail safe to prevent injuries or contamination of air, water, or their environment. This includes anti-siphon equipment, H & V equipment that moves and controls air movement where positive or negative pressures are required to prevent contamination in operating rooms, nursery areas and contagious rooms.

Pay particular attention to all mechanical and electrical equipment that carry out these functions and don't be afraid to ask the design engineers how any of these systems work and what happens if some parts were to fail. Check the operating sequence of various controls. How are they interlocked to prevent problems and shut off other parts of systems in a worst case scenario. Be curious how all these systems would work under various failure modes. Don't be afraid to ask a dumb question, they are much easier to handle than a stupid mistake.

There is so much to learn with the new energy management systems and how they can work under failure modes. Even good engineers need a little prompting now and then to assure nothing is overlooked when it comes to the safety and protection of a hospital and its people.

Of course, I've only touched on a small portion of the many things that help make a hospital function during an emergency. The rest is up to all of us with good, complete and discerning inspection.