



Autumn Hazards That You Can Avoid: 5 Tips

By Susan Saldibar

Fall is a transitional season. It marks the beginning of the big push towards the holidays. The weather is changing (unless you're in SoCal, like me), decorations are going up, and the potential for all kinds of hazards increases.

Shane Malecha, Clinical Practice Specialist for [Aegis Therapies](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner) is in a great position to observe how communities safeguard their residents, as seasonal changes present new health and safety challenges. He also sees many that don't pay as close attention as they should.

I caught up with Shane last week and he talked about five key things communities should be aware of as we move from the warmth and laid-back vibe of Summer into the cooler, faster paced months ahead. Here is what Shane recommends operators do to keep your residents safe, healthy and emotionally prepped for all the hustle and bustle of Fall/Winter:

1. **Outdoor areas:** Don't assume your gardener is taking care of everything! An early frost can turn bricks and cement into a slippery nightmare overnight. Fallen leaves are also slippery. Shane warns communities to be especially vigilant as the weather begins to change. These hazardous conditions can develop within hours.
2. **Decorations:** Pumpkins, hanging witches on broomsticks and skeletons may be fun for visitors, but they can [create anxiety](#) for residents. Be especially sensitive to changes in behavior that might be sparked by decorations that remove guiding landmarks for residents.

3. **Foods:** Fall begins the surge towards holiday sweets. Staff and family members may bring in foods that not all residents should be exposed to. Be sure to keep watch over all those Halloween left over Snickers bars and candy corn put out in common areas. Staff doesn't want the temptation at home and your residents don't need the temptation in your community!
4. **Heating:** Heaters that haven't been used all summer can be bacteria and dust traps. Turning on the heat may expose your residents to all kinds of upper respiratory ailments and exacerbate existing lung issues. Be sure to change filters and clean ducts.
5. **Illnesses:** Flu doesn't wait around until winter to strike. Make sure that all residents and staff are up to date on flu and pneumonia vaccinations.

Not only is it important for staff and facilities maintenance people to be aware of Fall hazards, it is a good idea to make residents' families aware. Share with them what your community is doing to keep their loved ones safe during the Fall months. Not only is it good practice, it's good competitive marketing!



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