

# MOTORIZED WHEELCHAIRS AND SCOOTERS

Most organizations recognize that access to motorized devices will improve the mobility of many of their residents, prolong their independence in some cases, and in general, improve their access to services and activities. However, improper or hazardous use of this motorized equipment may also create a risk exposure for the organization. Incidents involving these devices may lead to an injury to the driver, another resident, a guest at the facility or staff/volunteers. Damage to walls, floors or other property are also an additional risk.

Consider the following when a resident requests use of a motorized wheelchair or scooter:

## Resident Assessment and Orientation

- Have the resident demonstrate evidence of sufficient skills to follow facility safety rules related to motorized mobility aids. This includes orientation of the facility layout and environment to increase the resident's familiarity with any hazards they may encounter while using their motorized device.
- Obtain a statement signed by the resident attesting their knowledge and understanding of the facility's procedures regarding safe use of the wheelchair or scooter.

## Safety Rules

- Motorized devices are not to be operated at a speed that is faster than ambulatory residents walking in the immediate area, generally less than two miles per hour. This is considered the "safe speed" for the facility.
- Ambulating residents are afforded the right-of-way at all times.
- Residents who are using motorized mobility aids should pause before entering a corridor or public walkway and should stop at corridor and sidewalk intersections where ambulating residents and others may not be readily observed.
- Motorized mobility aids are operated in a manner that does not impede or interfere with normal resident flow, including a roommate's ability to freely access the common area of the room.
- Motorized mobility aids parked near common areas may not be left in a manner that blocks the flow of residents or access to emergency exits.
- Motorized aids may not block entrances to buildings, doorways, stairways, walkways, disability ramps,



corridors or sidewalks. They are not to be parked where they obstruct the entrances or exits of any building.

- When parked, the motorized device is secured from movement, including placing the device in the off position and engaging an emergency brake if one exists. Devices that require a key for operation are not to be left with the key in the ignition when the operating resident is not present.
- Routine inspection of motorized mobility aids should be performed to ensure the equipment is in good working order.

### **Unexpected Events and Injuries and/or Safety Rules Violations**

- Any unexpected event, accident or injury must be reported to the staff immediately.
- Following an accident or injury involving a resident's motorized device where failure to follow the safety rules is identified, the resident is re-evaluated for the safe operation of the cart.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability  
<https://www.nchpad.org/>

The National Institute for Rehabilitation Engineering (NIRE)  
<https://www.nchpad.org/Directories/Organizations/2079/National~Institute~for~Rehabilitation~Engineering>

U.S. Department of Education | National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research  
<https://www.ed.gov/category/program/national-institute-disability-and-rehabilitation-research>