



**CALIFORNIA
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION**

*Providing Leadership in
Health Policy and Advocacy*

November 16, 2015

California Buildings Standards Commission (CBSC)
Attn: Michael Nearman, Acting Executive Director
2525 Natomas Park Drive, Suite 130
Sacramento, CA 95833

SUBJECT: Support of OSHPD Proposed Building Code Standards including the use of plastic pipe in hospitals and other health care facilities and allowance of the use of plenum returns in outpatient clinics

Dear Commission Members:

The California Hospital Association (CHA) which represents over 400 hospitals and health systems is pleased to be able to provide comment on the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) proposed code changes being heard by the CBSC on December 16 & 17, 2015.

CHA has reviewed:

OSHPD 01/15: California Administrative Code, Part 1, Title 24
Regarding the California Administrative Code, California Code Of Regulations, Title 24, Part 1 Safety Standards for Health Facilities

OSHPD 04/15: California Administrative Code, Part 1 and California Building Code, Part 2, Title 24
Regarding Proposed Changes to the California Administrative Code and 2015 International Building Code published by the International Code Council carrying forward existing California structural amendments Parts 1 & 2 structural and seismic safety provisions into the 2016 California Building Code.

OSHPD 02/15: California Building Code, Part 2, Volume 1, Title 24
2015 International Building Code published by the International Code Council carrying forward existing California non-structural amendments into the 2016 California Building Code.

OSHPD 01/14: California Electrical Code, Part 3, Title 24
2014 National Electrical Code (NEC) of the National Fire Protection Association to be published as the 2016 California Electrical Code, Part 3, Title 24

OSHPD 06/15: California Mechanical Code, Part 4, Title 24
2015 Uniform Mechanical Code (UMC) of the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials to be published as the 2016 California Mechanical Code, Part 4, Title 24

OSHPD 05/15: California Plumbing Code, Part 5, Title 24
2015 Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC) of the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials to be published as the 2016 California Plumbing Code, Part 5, Title 24

During recent code cycles OSHPD has been attempting to bring codes applicable to hospitals in line with national codes. California hospitals believe OSHPD is doing so in their proposed building standards packages. CHA also believes that OSHPD's proposed building standards meet the CBSC's Nine-Point Criteria required of all proposed building standards.

For the above reasons CHA urges CBSC approval of OSHPD's proposed building standards as noted.

However, there are two subjects of the proposed OSHPD building standards on which CHA wants to elaborate. One is the California Plumbing Code, California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 5, where OSHPD is once again proposing the use of plastic pipe in plumbing applications for OSHPD 1, 2, 3, and 4 facilities. The other is to allow plenum return air in certain areas of OSHPD 3 clinics.

The Affordable Care Act is based on the fact that cost-efficient health care will be delivered in the most appropriate setting. Not allowing plastic pipe to be used in health facilities creates economic and accessibility barriers to needed healthcare especially for the underserved areas and harms the welfare of patients who cannot access these unaffordable needed facilities. It also creates an unnecessary expense. It is unfortunate that California health facilities cannot use code approved plastic pipe in any health facility setting and plenum air returns in outpatient clinic settings while health care facilities in the other 49 states can readily do so.

Besides the welfare of patients there are a number of other issues which are costly to California health care facilities due to the current prohibition of these proposals.

- A number of health care facilities experience corrosion to copper and iron pipe due to the nature of the soils with which the pipes have contact.
- Some copper and cast iron pipes in laboratories corrode due to the chemicals which they come in contact.
- Under current code if a licensed rural or inner city clinic wishes to move into an existing building that has plastic pipe the plastic pipe has to be replaced. This is an unnecessary expense which prohibits some needed clinics from opening. Likewise, if a licensed clinic is moving into a high-rise with plastic pipe, only that portion with the clinic requires replacement of the plastic pipe and only within the confines of the clinic. Again, another unnecessary expense. In many cases, replacing pipe may trigger other code changes as well as asbestos abatement.
- Similarly, conversion of existing health care provider locations into licensed clinics disallow continued use of plenum returns for general non-sensitive clinical settings causing additional expense and delay in making these facilities available to the public.

Due to the complexity of hospitals it is our understanding that most hospitals use well-trained union plumbers. Plumbers prefer to use copper and cast iron pipe. Therefore, we do not see the elimination of copper and cast iron pipe in hospitals. However, we believe hospitals need the flexibility to use plastic pipe when it is more beneficial than the current code allowances.

CHA is not aware of any health problems associated with plastic pipe in hospitals and other health care facilities across the United States. CHA is also pleased that OSHPD has contracted for an Environmental

Impact Report relating to the use of perfluoroalkoxy in dialysis branch lines and plastic pipe in plumbing applications in OSHPD 1, 2, 3 and 4 facilities. We believe the EIR as well as the Negative Declaration for plenum use will reinforce what is already known in the other 49 states—the use of plastic piping materials is safe for use in health care facilities and return air plenums in outpatient clinics where no pressure relationship is required is not detrimental to provision of adequate care.

For the above reasons, CHA urges the Building Standards Commission full support and approval of OSHPD's proposed regulation packages.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (916) 552-7681 or chummel@calhospital.org.

Sincerely,



Cheri Hummel

Vice President Emergency Management and Facilities