



SAFE LIFT (October 2011, National Nurse)

As registered nurses and other healthcare workers know, taking care of patients can literally be backbreaking work. These professions report some of the highest rates of musculoskeletal injuries in the nation, and countless nurses have had their careers cut short after hurting their backs lifting a patient at work.

That's why RNs in California are celebrating a new state law signed in October that requires all acute-care hospitals as of Jan. 1, 2012 to have trained lift team personnel and also equipment available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help move and maneuver patients. Sponsored by the California Nurses Association/National Nurses United and carried by Assembly-member Sandré Swanson, AB 1136 is known as the "safe lift" bill and is considered to be the strongest such worker protection law in the country. By requiring safe lifting policies, the law also protects patients from preventable falls and other injuries.

"California's nursing workforce is aging at the same time patient acuity and obesity are rising," said Bonnie Castillo, RN and CNA/NNU legislative director. "Manual lifting can injure fragile patients by putting too much pressure on sensitive joints and compromised skin. This is a great step forward to protect our nurses and other healthcare workers from injury, and provide patients with safe and appropriate care."

CNA/NNU had worked for years to pass lift team legislation. Earlier ver-

sions had passed the Legislature but been vetoed by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. This year, RNs successfully fought the opposition of the California Hospital Association, the lobbying group of the hospital industry, to pass the law and Gov. Jerry Brown signed it Oct. 7.

The need for a safe lift law has been apparent for years. Bureau of Labor Statistics data in 2008 documented that nationally, 36,000 healthcare workers were injured by lifting and transferring patients. Nurses endure more work-related musculoskeletal injuries than truck drivers or construction workers—and California leads the nation in the number of musculoskeletal injuries.

Nursing surveys have found that 83 percent of RNs work in spite of back pain, 52 percent report chronic back pain, and 12 percent who leave the profession say back injuries were the main, or a major, reason for leaving the RN workforce.

"Nurses are essential to our healthcare system and it is important that we have proper safety measures in place to protect them from career-ending injuries," said Swanson in a statement. "AB 1136 will decrease the rate of injuries for nurses and other healthcare workers and improve patient safety. I am pleased that our governor recognized that the bill preserves quality care for patients, strengthens the nursing workforce, and protects hospital budgets."

Swanson said he was compelled to introduce the bill because his own mother, a lifelong registered nurse,

retired partly due to severe back pain. In addition to requiring safe lift policies, trained personnel, and equipment for handling patients, the law also states that the registered nurse, as the coordinator of care, decides based on her or his professional judgment of each patient's need how each lift will proceed.

The law also requires that lift team members be trained and designated ahead of time in five areas of body exposure: vertical, lateral, bariatric, repositioning, and ambulation. Most importantly, the law also prevents RNs and healthcare workers from being disciplined for refusing to lift if they have concerns about their own or patient safety, or if they are asked to lift with untrained personnel.

The law applies to all acute-care facilities, even rural and children's hospitals. CalOSHA enforces the law, and hospitals can incur fines and penalties if they do not comply. Correctional facilities and developmental centers are exempt.



UPDATE ON COUNTY BUDGET TO RNPA



In the November 2011 News-break, RNPA updated you on the County budget situation as well as the upcoming lay-offs for MICC, MSSU, and CPSP. All affected nurses are scheduled to be in their new work location effective December 19, 2011. Fortunately, no nurses went out the County doors, but 32 nurses were impacted by the lay-offs. Here is how it all panned out. MSSU closed their inpatient unit eliminating 8 beds due to low census. Administration had planned to move this unit in 2013 when the new building

is scheduled for completion. The closing of MSSU inpatient caused a ripple affect in TCNU. MSSU and TCNU are considered one competency area for lay-off purposes. The final reduction for MSSU were 10 -FT, 1-.8, 3-.6, 1-.5, and 1 ANM.

In addition, the County added Tele codes in 3 Surg and 4 Med, and MSSU outpatient. The codes added included 1- FT, 1-.9, 2-.8, 10-.6, and 2-.5.

Unfortunately, MICC is experiencing their third round of lay-offs due to a decrease in the birthrate. MICC management is requesting to reduce their

unit by 5-FTE. The break down is as follows: 3- FT, 1-.8, and 2-.6. This will result in 6 RNs leaving the unit and being inplaced into vacant positions in Pedi, PICU, and NICU.

Prior to these nurses being inplaced, the NICU reemployment list was activated resulting in 3 RN's that were laid off last January going back to their unit. NICU had three vacancies as a result of retirements on the unit.

CPSP had a reduction of 1.5 FTE. This resulted 1 RN to be inplaced. At this time, Ambulatory management is looking for a position for her.

SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK



As you know, RNPA has partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and Santa Mateo Counties to bring hope, relief and security to our neighbors struggling with hunger.

15th RNPA members collected and dropped off at the RNPA office various canned foods, crackers, noodles, applesauce and beverages to donate to Second Harvest Food Bank. RNPA will drop our contribution off this weekend to Second Harvest Food Bank.

RNPA will also make a financial contribution to help insure that families in need in our community will not go hun-

gry this holiday.

On Wednesday, January 11, 2012, from 6-8PM, RNPA will be sponsoring a food sorting night for Second Harvest Food Bank at their San Jose Distribution Center. If you are interested in participating, please contact the RNPA Office, 292-6061, we have limited space.

From December 1st thru December

HOLIDAY GRIEVANCE UPDATE

RNPA and the County have agreed to an arbitrator for the Holiday grievance.



This is the grievance wherein SEIU 521 and the County during 521's negotiation agreed not to observe October 15 and November 25, 2011, January 1, 2012, and February 20, 2012 for Fiscal Year 2112 along with the 2nd Monday in October and

3rd Monday in February for Fiscal Year 2013 as holidays as a cost saving measure. The County imposed this takeaway without bargaining with RNPA.

As a result, RNPA filed a grievance. The County responded to the grievance stating that Holidays were a County-wide benefit therefore, changes could be imposed on all County bargaining

unit due to me-too clause.

Arbitrator Barry Winograd is scheduled to preside over this arbitration on January 6, 2012.

In the meantime, if you work the Holidays save your schedule along with paycheck stub and any other supporting documentation (i.e. exception form, etc.)

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