

## Preventing Surgical Fires: Important New Recommendations Released

*ECRI Institute and Anesthesia Patient Safety Foundation Offer Resources for Reducing Fire Risk*

A flash fire on a patient during surgery is a very real tragedy, often leading to disfigurement, disability or even death. Though surgical fires are uncommon their consequences are grave enough to warrant ongoing prevention education by healthcare providers.

For this reason, ECRI Institute® ([www.ecri.org](http://www.ecri.org)), an independent not for profit organization that researches the best approaches to improving patient care, in collaboration with the US Anaesthesia Patient Safety Foundation (APSF), released important changes to its recommendations for preventing surgical fires. The changes are detailed in the article, "New Clinical Guide to Surgical Fire Prevention," featured in ECRI Institute's October issue of *Health Devices*, a monthly journal featuring independent, comparative evaluations of medical devices and systems, as well as in-depth technology guidance.

Most importantly, the organisation's recommendations focus on eliminating the traditional practice of open delivery of 100% oxygen during sedation. Securing the airway is recommended if the patient requires an increased oxygen concentration.

"As the oxygen concentration increases in an area, so will the risk of fire," explains Mark Bruley, BS, CCE, vice president, accident and forensic investigation, ECRI Institute. "Fires in oxygen-enriched atmospheres ignite much more easily, burn hotter and spread more quickly. The goal is to stop open oxygen delivery for surgery around the head and upper chest. For exceptional cases, which are detailed in the new guidance, delivery of the minimum concentration of oxygen necessary to maintain adequate blood oxygen saturation is recommended."

The updated report comes at a time when many hospitals and healthcare groups, the Joint Commission, and professional societies are taking extra steps to prevent surgical fires. New recommendations for oxygen delivery during surgery are detailed in the *Health Devices* article. Also included is additional guidance for avoiding surgical fires, and how to respond if a fire occurs.

Also, ECRI Institute and APSF are producing a new surgical fire educational video to be released in late 2009 and developing an online course with continuing medical education credits to be available in early 2010.

For more information about how to this information or to obtain more detail about the ECRI Institute's Health Devices activities, call +44 (0)1707 831001 +44 (0)1707 831001 , ext. 493, e-mail [info@ecri.org](mailto:info@ecri.org), or write to ECRI Institute, Weltech Centre, Ridgeway, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL8 2AA, United Kingdom.