

Falls Are A Common But Preventable Danger In Nursing Homes

Written by Australian Business

SCOTTSDALE, AZ, September 24, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- Older people who live in nursing homes may have difficulty walking, and they may have problems with memory or cognition. Older people with these problems also have a higher risk of falling than other groups, and nursing homes should be a place where people can be protected from falls. Yet falls remain a serious hazard for nursing home residents.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that half to three-fourths of nursing home residents fall each year, more than twice the rate for older adults who live in the community. An average 100-bed nursing home reports 100 to 200 [falls](#) annually, and the CDC believes many falls are not reported. These falls can result in serious injuries or death. Sadly, in many cases they are preventable.

Consequences For Nursing Home Falls

Approximately 1,800 people die from falls in nursing homes each year. In some cases, their deaths result in [wrongful death](#) claims for nursing home negligence, and employees may face civil or criminal penalties.

In one recent case, a nursing home resident in New York died in February 2012 after a nurse's aide dropped her while trying to lift her from a wheelchair. To prevent falls like this one, the nursing home ordinarily required two people to use a mechanical lift to transfer patients from a wheelchair, but only one employee was assisting the 86-year-old woman, who suffered a broken leg and nose and a fractured spine.

The nurse's aide then tried to persuade another employee to say she was assisting and present when the aide tried to hoist the patient. She was charged with manslaughter.

In another case, a family filed a lawsuit against an Illinois nursing home, alleging that the nursing home failed to prevent a woman with dementia, Parkinson's, anxiety and depression from falling. The woman had been identified as having a higher risk for falls because of her medical conditions. She fell forward from her wheelchair and hit her head on the floor, sustaining head injuries. The lawsuit also accuses the home of allowing the woman to develop severe decubitus ulcers. She developed other conditions as a result of her fall injuries and ulcers and died, according to the family's lawsuit. The complaint seeks more than \$100,000.

Preventing Falls

For every death from a fall at a nursing home, many more patients are injured. Nursing home residents who survive falls may have hip fractures, head injuries and other serious injuries. The CDC estimates that 10 to 20 percent of falls cause serious injuries. Two to 6 percent of nursing home falls result in fractures.

Not every fall can be prevented, but the chances of a fall can be reduced. Nursing homes can take steps that include:

- Identifying the factors that make individual residents more at risk of falls- Minimizing the use of medications that create additional risk of falls, when possible- Adding grab bars, lowering bed heights, raising toilet seats and making other changes that allow residents to move around safely- Teaching residents who do not have cognitive impairments to avoid situations that can lead to falls

If a loved one has been seriously injured or died from injuries in a fall at a nursing home, speak to a qualified attorney. You may be able to hold the nursing home accountable for its negligence.

Knapp & Roberts provides experienced and caring representation for people who have been injured or killed due to nursing home neglect, including injuries due to falls. We serve people in Phoenix, Scottsdale and other areas of Arizona. For more information, call 480-991-7677 or visit www.krattorneysneglect.com .