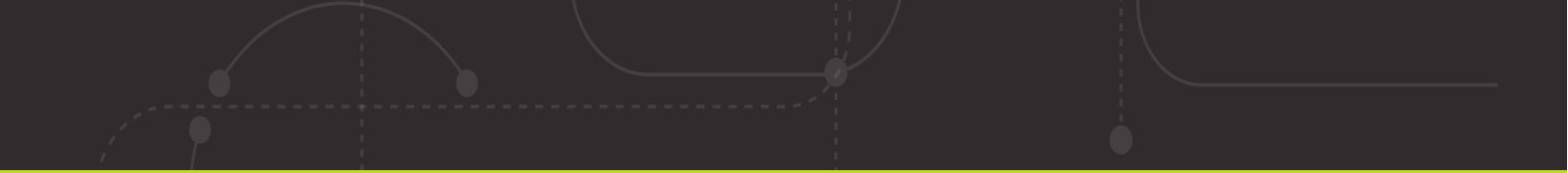


SECURING SENIOR LIVING FACILITIES





In the news and various political arenas, much is being made of the rapidly growing population of senior citizens and the expected demands that this will place on families and the nation at large. All of this technology is amazing, but machines cannot do it all. As costs of care continue to rise and more people will be asked to perform more duties, technology helps the professionals to be more effective in protecting and caring for the elderly. By integrating today's technology with portable devices carried by the staff as they conduct their routine observations, response times are substantially reduced between the occurrence, discovery and resolution of a problem.

If selecting a senior care facility as a residence for an elderly relative elicits guilt or a feeling of sidestepping an obligation, think again. A fully equipped facility with protective health and safety devices monitored by trained experts can be a safer and more comfortable place for an aging relative.

The Capability of Technology

Among other things, the demand for effective senior medical and residential support will increase and an acceleration of health and safety monitoring technology must evolve to prevent unnecessary tragedy and provide positive and safe environments for the elderly. In the end: a senior care facility with the latest technology is usually better equipped to monitor and treat emergencies that may occur.

Technological Innovations

Technology plays a critical role in relieving the stress and, perhaps, the guilt of moving an elderly person into a managed care facility. Tech coordinators and managers of today's modern senior care facilities should always be researching new technologies to identify innovations that can spot potential problems and help to communicate and coordinate effective responses.

Technology Designed For Senior Living Facilities

Monitoring the health and location of residents in senior living communities, particularly assisted living facilities, is a critical responsibility. In most cases, the question is not “if,” but “when” a situation may occur that requires immediate response. New technologies, sensors and monitoring devices are playing an ever increasing role in overseeing the well-being and care of residents. Devices have been designed to alert care personnel remotely to potentially dangerous situations such as notable changes in respiration, heart rate, body temperature, and even hydration levels.

Wandering Management Systems

Wandering management is integral to maintaining the safety of residents in senior care facilities. Technological advancements in wandering management dramatically reduce the instance of elopements while protecting resident dignity with:

1. Physical barriers created with magnetic door locks
2. Sending audible or silent alerts to staff when a transmitter reaches a monitored area
3. Video surveillance of interior and exterior doors

Monitoring systems are a key element of ensuring the care plans for residents who are at risk for wandering is executed to their full capacity by assisting the staff with heightened security and alerts.

Access Control

Security of residents, visitors, staff, and property can set a facility apart from its competition. Access control technology provides peace of mind for loved ones and caregivers by alerting staff of:

1. After hours visitors
2. Video surveillance and controlled entry of exterior doors
3. Unauthorized access to medical records and medication storage

Coupling wireless technology with other aspects of access control, such as RFID technology and video monitoring, the safety of residents, visitors, and staff is secure. This technology enhances the efficiency of building security by placing more information at the disposal of the staff while they focus on providing person-centered care.

Nurse Call

As with the other subsets or elements of senior living security, technology allows for more efficient responses to Nurse Calls. By having real time information at the disposal of the staff, nurse calls can be effectively managed to meet the needs and expectations of the residents while reducing response times. The effectiveness in deploying wireless technology to enhance the efficiency of the staff to respond to nurse calls facilitates:

1. Identification of exact need prior to resident visual contact
2. Escalation of calls to assigned staff
3. Reduction of time spent per call and faster response times to critical needs

Identifying resident needs and expectations concerning nurse calls, and allowing reasonable response times, less time is required to meet those needs and expectations thereby allowing the staff to address other more pressing concerns throughout the facility.

Design Trends in Senior Care Facilities

To address the current and expected rapid growth of the number of senior living facilities, the Building Design + Construction Network¹ lists some top design trends to be expected in the coming years. Future design elements will integrate features that respect seniors' privacy and dignity, create a home-like atmosphere, expand individual choice and, notably, use technology to enhance the quality of life.

Sources

1. <http://www.bdcnetwork.com/>

Facility Technology

The physical safety of those living in senior living facilities should be the top priority. Securing the grounds and building with integrated technology is the first step. Motion sensors and elements to track the ingress and egress of individuals are an essential feature to alert the staff to unexpected movement. These devices are intended to prevent unwanted intruders while also identifying any unexpected elopement by residents.

Close-circuit cameras and monitors should complement the motion sensors and allow the staff to identify who or what is moving around. Ample hallway motion and smoke detectors should be installed for further protection. And an integrated link should instantly alert outside help as needed.



Sensors can detect doors propped open or windows left open and notify staff through a nurse call notification system. Nurse call systems can also be integrated into an external Area of Rescue Assistance System and Outdoor Emergency Phone Systems. These are designed to alert police, security and staff for immediate response. Wireless nurse call systems are available in a growing number of senior independent and assisted living facilities.

Resident In-Room Sensors

Motion sensors may be placed within an apartment that can be trained to identify specific problems, such as a fall in the shower. The device will alert a staff member to the incident and call for a response. Otherwise the individual may be unconscious and not discovered for some time. And the system retains the privacy of the individual, eliminating the need for in-room cameras and microphones. Also the sensors may be programmed to detect when there is no movement for an extended period of time and alert the staff to check out the situation.

Wearable Technology

A variety of unobtrusive wearable devices has been developed to monitor a wide range of activity to help professionals oversee the health and safety of seniors in their care. Some of these devices can also be used in home care situations, but more often than not, these are used in modern senior living facilities, allowing for the observation of several residents at once. These devices reduce patient care costs by allowing one person to monitor the circumstances of several patients far more effectively and efficiently than in the past.

Patient Movement - devices track the movement and whereabouts of elderly wanderers through GPS technology. Another device incorporated with a GPS system provides a call button that contacts the nearest care facility in case of an emergency while away from the residence.

Health Monitoring - attachable sensors and wireless pendants are used to monitor vital signs continually. In addition, skin sensors can monitor blood glucose levels without the need for skin-penetrating blood tests.

Devices are also available for accurately managing medicine dosages and intake. In addition, wristband monitors can track hydration, exercise and caloric intake and burn.

Technology Provides Peace of Mind

Integrating technology can substantially reduce response times, create efficiencies so staff can focus on care, and most importantly, provide peace of mind for residents, caregivers and loved ones.

These are the trends that set senior care facilities, including assisted living, nursing homes, or independent living, out from the others. Innovative solutions in senior living technology work to put the residents in a safer living space, and providing peace of mind for family and friends of their senior loved ones.

Contact Technology Install Partners for a Free Senior Living Security Consultation