

Section 2

Narrative

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Primer Package - Tuberculosis

During this decade the issue of Tuberculosis has again gained prominence in both medical literature and the national press as a major threat to life and health. The numbers of active cases have increased nationwide, particularly along the coastal areas of the United States where there are dense populations, but no area has been spared, and sporadic cases have been reported in all VA regions.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Service Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and VA's TB Guidelines are major controls for current recommendations to be followed by VA Facilities. (Enclosure 1 of this Design Guide.) The VA's Program & Facility Planning Guidance for Tuberculosis Programs of August 18, 1995 defines characteristics of TB Programs by discussing Responsibility, Risk Assessment Characteristics, TB Plans, Periodic Reassessment Identification, Evaluation and treatment of TB Patients, Engineering Controls, Healthcare Worker Training, Counseling & Screening and Personnel Health. There is also a bibliography of contemporary relevant sources. This document has been added to the HVAC Design Manual for Hospital Projects as item A36 "TB Criteria" and should apply to all future VA Projects.

VA Standards Service (I87C) has recently completed a Technical Summary titled HVAC Requirements in TB Isolation Room Suite which defines mechanical requirements for this most important room. See Enclosure 2 and Guide Plates 3-1 and 3-2 provided in this document.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Recommendations and Reports issued a Guidelines for Preventing the Transmission of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis in Healthcare Facilities, dated Oct. 28, 1994. Vol. 43, No. RR-13 This report is too large to include in this Primer but contains much useful reference material. The Report covers many of the items mentioned in the VA Program and Facility Planning Guidance Report but has *more detail* on the many aspects of TB. The CDC Report contains several recommendations for isolation rooms:

1. An Ante Room may increase the effectiveness of the isolation room by minimizing the potential escape of droplet nuclei into the corridor when the bedroom door is open.

2. HEPA Filters in the exhaust system should be considered whenever exhaust air could possibly re-enter the exhaust system. According to CDC, a regularly scheduled maintenance and monitoring program is required for HEPA filters. A dioctyl phthalate (DOP) penetration test should be performed at the initial installation and every time the filter is changed or moved. The test should be repeated every six months.

3. Emergency Power the medical center could consider emergency power for fans if it is determined to be practical.

These items are recommended, but not mandatory and can be precluded by budgetary restraints