



Oregon OSHA, 350 Winter St. NE, Room 430, Salem, Oregon 97301-3878

For immediate release
August 14, 2008

Dallas retirement home awarded Oregon OSHA grant *Nearly \$650,000 will promote safe patient handling to reduce workplace injuries*

(Salem) – As part of an effort to reduce injuries and claims in the health care industry, Oregon’s Occupational Safety and Health Division (Oregon OSHA) has awarded the second of two grants to Oregon health care facilities to help with safe patient handling. Dallas Retirement Village will receive \$647,830 to buy patient-lifting equipment and provide training to its employees.

Earlier this year, Oregon OSHA awarded \$394,617 to Good Shepherd Medical Center in Hermiston. The grant money comes from the Workers’ Benefit Fund, maintained by the Department of Consumer and Business Services.

“With health care costs continuing to rise, it’s essential we focus on developing new practices to keep workers healthy and prevent injuries in the first place,” said Governor Ted Kulongoski. “These grants will help create models for reducing injuries throughout Oregon in an industry with so many unique risks.”

On average, nurses lift a cumulative nine tons a week – the equivalent of 28 Double Decker buses per year. Sprains and strains among nurses and other health care workers comprise a significant portion of all workplace injuries, with more than 500 reported each year in Oregon. Oregon OSHA, a division of DCBS, has been working with the Oregon Coalition for Healthcare Ergonomics to develop a pilot program for safe patient handling at Dallas Retirement Village that can be applied to other rural long-term care facilities in the state.

“The new equipment is going to make a big difference for our nursing staff,” said Eric Nauta, certified nursing assistant at the senior community. “With ceiling lifts in every room and reliable, brand new portable lifts out on the floor, we will be saving time and also a lot of back pain.”

Injuries in health care are a growing problem, both in Oregon and nationwide, and contribute to rising health care costs. A recent report released by DCBS shows that while workers’ compensation claims in other industries are declining, health care claims have remained steady. Claims in the health care industry represented 9 percent of all claims in Oregon in 2005, an increase from 7.3 percent in 1996. Safe-lifting programs at Dallas Retirement Village and other care homes across the state could reduce the number of claims by cutting injuries.

“There are proven ergonomic solutions to the day-to-day hazards care givers face,” said Michael Wood, administrator of Oregon OSHA. “This grant will allow the facility to demonstrate how those tools can make a difference in the real world of long-term care in Oregon.”

Oregon OSHA is taking a multi-faceted approach to reducing health care claims. Consultants work with hospitals and other long-term care facilities to conduct training for safe patient handling and safety committees. The division also has a federally recognized alliance with the Oregon Coalition for Healthcare Ergonomics.

###

About Oregon OSHA:

Oregon OSHA, a division of the Department of Consumer & Business Services, enforces the state's workplace safety and health rules and works to improve workplace safety and health for all Oregon workers. For more information, go to www.orosha.org.

The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit www.dcbs.oregon.gov.

About Dallas Retirement Village:

Dallas Retirement Village is a full-service, faith based not-for-profit senior living community of over 300 residents. Providing exceptional service since 1947, Dallas Retirement Village's staff and volunteer team have built an exceptional reputation and regulatory compliance record.

Contacts:

Melanie Mesaros, Oregon OSHA Public Information Officer
503-947-7428
melanie.l.mesaros@state.or.us

Cory J. Oace, Dallas Retirement Village Health Center Administrator
503-623-1808
coace@drvhome.com