What happens if a hospital fails a CMS life safety survey?

THE DIRECT ANSWER

If a hospital fails a CMS life safety survey, the consequences scale with severity: standard-level deficiencies require an acceptable plan of correction and a revisit survey; condition-level deficiencies (including Immediate Jeopardy) put the hospital on the enforcement track — with CMS able to impose remedies up to and including termination of the Medicare provider agreement . The process always gives the hospital notice and an opportunity to correct before the ultimate sanction.

THE ESCALATION LADDER

- Statement of deficiencies (CMS-2567). The survey findings, delivered after the survey. The hospital submits a plan of correction with completion dates.
- Revisit survey. Surveyors return to verify correction. Uncorrected deficiencies escalate.
- Condition-level citation. The Life Safety from Fire condition is out of compliance — the enforcement track begins.
- Remedies. Depending on severity: directed plans of correction, denial of payment for new admissions, civil money penalties, appointment of temporary management.
- Termination. Under 42 CFR 489.53, CMS may terminate the provider agreement — the last resort, after notice and opportunity to correct (or immediately for Immediate Jeopardy that isn't removed).

IMMEDIATE JEOPARDY CHANGES EVERYTHING

- If surveyors find Immediate Jeopardy — a situation where patient health or safety is at immediate risk — the timeline compresses drastically. The hospital must remove the jeopardy immediately (often within 23 days for the classic termination track), and CMS can move.

FIELD QUESTION

What is Immediate Jeopardy in a CMS survey?

A finding that a situation poses immediate risk to patient health or safety. It triggers an accelerated correction and enforcement timeline.

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