



Rhode Island's Surgical Nurses Will Soon Be Smoke-free in Their Operating Rooms

Rhode Island is the first state to require all licensed hospitals and freestanding ambulatory surgical facilities to adopt policies to use a smoke evacuation system for surgical procedures that generate surgical smoke.

(Denver, Colo.) June 5, 2018 – Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo earlier this week [signed into law legislation](#) that will require the elimination of surgical smoke by use of smoke evacuation systems in Rhode Island operating rooms. As the first state to address surgical smoke evacuation by law in the United States, Rhode Island has set a national precedent in the protection and safety of perioperative nurses and their colleagues on the surgical team.

The Association of periOperative Registered Nurses ([AORN](#)), advocates for surgical nurses' workplace safety, spearheaded the law's passage in collaboration with the Rhode Island State Nurses Association and provided testimony on the dangers of surgical smoke, a by-product of use of energy-generating devices.

"There are no specific standards for laser and electrosurgery plume hazards," said Danielle Glover, manager of AORN Government Affairs. "Instead, the safety policies have been left to the facilities and, nationwide, too few have taken action to protect their healthcare workers. We hope Rhode Island's proactive legislation will lead other states to follow suit."

Donna Policastro, executive director of Rhode Island State Nurses expressed her appreciation to Rep. Joseph McNamara and Senator Cynthia Coyne for their support of nurses and their work to pass legislation that insures a safe work environment. "Rhode Island State Nurses Association is proud to lead the way in creating a "culture of safety" for our nurses and all surgical team members in our state."

According to the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), each year "an estimated 500,000 workers, including surgeons, nurses, anesthesiologists, and surgical technologists, are exposed to laser or electrosurgical smoke." This smoke, also known as plume, includes carbon monoxide, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, and a variety of trace toxic gases. Prolonged exposure can lead to serious and life-threatening respiratory diseases.

ABOUT AORN

Founded in 1949, AORN unites and empowers leading surgical nurses, health care organizations and industry in working together to define standardized practice in the operating room. As the world's largest professional association for perioperative nurses, the association's evidence-based guidelines,

continuing education and clinical practice resources lead to optimal outcomes in patient care. AORN makes surgery safe for every patient, every time.