

Investigation into nursing home dangers

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TULSA, Okla. - Heartbreaking stories of people unable to get out of bed on their own left lying in their own waste.

Seven months after FOX23's Clay Loney began investigating allegations of abuse and neglect in Oklahoma nursing homes, the state is now taking action because of what FOX23 recently brought to the state's attention about residents' fears in a Tulsa area nursing home residents say is dangerously understaffed.

This woman fears retaliation, so FOX23 is hiding her identity. She told FOX23 every weekend at the nursing home where she lives is agonizing.

"And these people break my heart to see them because they don't have the care that they need and it makes me so mad," she said.

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"How could a state investigator come and ask anybody?" asked Loney.

"They're never there! They're never there when this thing happens," she said.

An employee backs her up.

"It's absolute insanity. It's insanity, there's no one there," she said.

FOX23 is also protecting the employee's identity because she can't afford to lose her job.

Loney intends to identify the nursing home they're talking about, but not yet.

Loney doesn't want to risk jeopardizing the state's ability to get in there and see what's really going on.

Just this week, the state confirmed it's launching an investigation based solely on what Loney learned.

Listen to what the resident and employee told me about one weekend when there were only two aides in the whole building to care for 76 people.

"I was so mad. My roommate was so wet that she was dripping on the floor," said the resident.

"If you lie in bed in your own feces and void, then your skin is going to break down and you're going to have bed wounds, bedsores," said the employee, "they can do what's called tunneling and they can kill you."

"They're sitting there screaming, 'Help me! Please help me,'" said the resident.

"I don't think the state has a clue, because if they did, they'd walk in through there and they'd shut us down. They would shut us down, it's that ridiculous," said the employee.

Federal regulations are vague, requiring nursing homes to have "adequate staff" to deliver good care.

However, the chief of Oklahoma's long-term care service, Dorya Huser, confirmed the state requires nursing homes to meet very

specific staffing levels based on the time of day.

The hours from 7 in the morning to 3 in the afternoon requires one direct-care staff member for every seven residents.

So, for 76 residents the nursing home was supposed to have 11 direct-care employees on the job, a far cry from two.

Huser told FOX23 the state will now " look very closely at the delivery of care and if it is compromised or resulted in harm to residents due to inadequate staffing."

The employee told me she's hoping the state can hold the nursing home owner accountable this time, because previous state inspectors have fallen short.

"They said we just can't do it. There's just too much. They're just way overwhelmed, they're like us, overworked and underpaid," said the employee.

As for the resident, she's just holding on.

"I'm sorry, I just can't stand to see them suffer," she said.

FOX23 let the chief of long-term care know there appears to be an urgent need for change at this nursing home.

Just as soon as the state is done with its investigation, Loney will go over the findings and identify which nursing home it is and what's being done to hold the owner accountable.

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