Regulatory Roundup: October Focus on Environment of Care & Infection Control

As the weather cools and respiratory illness season begins, Accrediting Organizations (AOs) and State surveyors are closely scrutinizing healthcare facility readiness. Maintaining compliance with **CMS Conditions of Participation (CoPs)** and AOs such as **CIHQ (Center for Improvement in Healthcare Quality)** and **The Joint Commission (TJC)** standards requires proactive management of your Environment of Care (EOC) and Infection Prevention (IP) programs.

1. Life Safety & Environment of Care

- **Fire Safety & Clearance:** Ensure all corridor widths remain entirely clear of mobile equipment, crash carts, and supplies. Surveyors from TJC and CIHQ continue to cite minor corridor clutter under Life Safety Code (NFPA 101) standards.
- **Fire Door Inspections:** Verify that annual operational inspections for swinging fire doors are up to date. Doors must latch completely and have no wedges, propping devices, or damaged gaskets.
- **Utility Systems Maintenance:** Document routine testing of emergency power supply systems (EPSS), ensuring load-test logs meet CMS and NFPA 99 requirements.

2. Infection Prevention & Seasonal Readiness

- **Respiratory Protection & Hygiene:** Re-emphasize standard and transmission-based precautions as influenza, RSV, and COVID-19 cases rise. Ensure adequate supplies of hand sanitizer, PPE, and respiratory hygiene stations are fully stocked at all facility entrances.
- **Water Management Plans (Legionella):** Review hot/cold water temperature logs and Legionella risk assessment monitoring. CMS mandates active water management program oversight to prevent opportunistic waterborne pathogens.
- **Staff Vaccination Campaigns:** Track and document employee influenza vaccination rates to satisfy both Accrediting Organizations (AOs) infection control standards and CMS quality reporting metrics.

3. Deeming Authority Audit Readiness

- **Cross-Walking Policies:** Confirm your facility's internal policies map directly to current standards across **CMS** and **AO** guidelines. Discrepancies between policy and practice are a primary source of condition-level citations.
- **Traceability:** Maintain readily accessible logs for staff competency, equipment maintenance, and hazardous material management (SDS sheets) so your team is prepared for unannounced survey visits.