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§482.51(a)(3) - Qualified registered nurses may perform circulating duties in the

operating room. In accordance with applicable State laws and approved medical staff policies and procedures, LPNs and surgical technologists may assist in circulatory duties under the supervision of a qualified registered nurse who is immediately available to respond to emergencies.

Interpretive Guidelines §482.51(a)(3)

The circulating nurse must be an RN. An LPN or surgical technologist may assist an RN in carrying out circulatory duties (in accordance with applicable State laws and medical-staff approved hospital policy) but the LPN or surgical technologist must be under the supervision of the circulating RN who is in the operating suite and who is available to immediately and physically respond/intervene to provide necessary interventions in emergencies. The supervising RN would not be considered immediately available if the RN was located outside the operating suite or engaged in other activities/duties which prevent the RN from immediately intervening and assuming whatever circulating activities/duties that were being provided by the LPN or surgical technologist. The hospital, in accordance with State law and acceptable standards of practice, must establish the qualifications required for RNs who perform circulating duties and LPNs and surgical technologists who assist with circulating duties.

Survey Procedures §482.51(a)(3)

- If LPNs and surgical technologists (STs) are assisting with circulating duties, verify that they do so in accordance with applicable State laws and medical-staff approved policies and procedures.
- Verify in situations where LPNs and STs are permitted to assist with circulating duties that a qualified RN supervisor is immediately available to respond to emergencies.
- Verify that RNs working as circulating nurses are working in accordance with applicable State laws and medical-staff approved policies and procedures.