Plain Language
Emergency Alerts

Making it easier to respond to emergencies
Hospital Codes

For decades emergency alert codes (e.g. Code Blue, Code Red) have been widely used in hospitals throughout the country. These codes are a way of quickly alerting team members to critical situations without alarming patients and visitors.
Code What?

Nationwide there is a lack of standardization that has resulted in a remarkably wide range of code words being used to identify critical situations.

15 states have already moved to plain language.

- California has 47 infant abduction and 61 combative patient codes
- Pennsylvania has 80 different codes, in 37 categories and 152 meanings
- New Jersey statewide statistics are unknown
Code Confusion

As RWJ Barnabas Health expands and our team members travel to different facilities throughout the system, the transition to plain language alerts is critical.
Why Plain Language?

Community Medical Center is committed to being a High Reliability Organization

• Plain Language Alerts send a clear message to employees, physicians, patients and visitors, empowering each to react immediately as needed to an emergency

• Decreased confusion among employees and physicians who work and visit multiple healthcare facilities.
Plain Language is Supported

- 15 states have already moved to plain language
- The Joint Commission
- The New Jersey Hospital Association
- The New Jersey Department of Health
- Institute of Medicine
- Center for Disease Control
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Food and Drug Administration
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- American Hospital Association
- Emergency Nurses Association
Plain Language...

• Allows individuals to understand and act appropriately
• Central tenant of written and verbal health literacy
• Recommended for compliance, interagency communication and safety of responders (NIMS compliant)
• Ensures transparency and facilitates patient and public safety
• The verbal equivalent of informed consent allowing everyone to make choices for their safety
Three Types of Alerts

1. Facility Alert
2. Security Alert
3. Medical Alert
Facility Alert

Just as it sounds, a Facility Alert is any type of emergency that affects all or part of the building and occupants. Examples include:

• Hazardous Materials spill
• Evacuation of all or part of the facility
• Fire
• Command Center Activation
• Weather Emergency
Security Alert

Any security threat to the facility or a specific location within. Examples include:

• Active Shooter
• Bomb Threat
• Disruptive / Disorderly Persons
• Elopement
• Missing Person (Child / Infant / Adult)

**Some Security Alerts may not be announced overhead**
Medical Alert

Any medical emergency that requires a clinical response from throughout the facility. Examples include:

- Mass Casualty Incident
- Cardiac Arrest
- Sepsis Alert
- Rapid Response Team
How Do I Initiate an Emergency Alert?

When an emergency occurs:

1. Call the emergency phone number ***111
   *If calling from an inpatient bedside phone, dial x555

2. Give your name and extension

3. State the emergency using this script
   A. Type of Alert (Facility, Security, Medical)
   B. Type of Emergency (e.g. Fire, Missing Person, Stroke)
   C. Detailed Location of the emergency
   D. If needed, specific directions
How Do I Initiate an Emergency Alert?

Examples:

“Hello, This is Scott at extension 12345”

“I have a Medical Alert – Adult Cardiac Arrest – Unit 2A”

“Hello, This is Scott at extension 12345”

“I have a Security Alert – Patient Elopement – Unit 3B”
What Will I Hear?

Once an Alert is received by the operator, a Plain Language Alert is to be made overhead, for example, the operators will announce:

• “Medical Alert – Stroke Response Team – 2F”
What Will I Hear?

Sometimes, directions may be included:

• “Medical Alert – Mass Casualty Incident – Emergency Department”

  • Examples of Directions
    • “All Departments Follow Your Mass Casualty Incident Protocols”
    • “All Employees Report To Your Departments and Await Further Instruction”

Directions may vary by emergency
CMC Approved Alerts

Facility Alert
• Command Center Activation
• Fire Alarm
• Decontamination (Internal or External)
• Evacuation
• Hazardous Materials Spill
• Shelter in Place
• Utility Interruption
• Technology Interruption
• Weather
CMC Approved Alerts

Security Alert
• Active Shooter
• Suspicious Item
• Bomb Threat
• Civil Disturbance
• Lockout / Lockdown
• Patient Elopement
• Hostage Situation
• Security Assistance
• Child / Infant Abduction
CMC Approved Alerts

Medical Alert

• Any Medical Emergency Requiring a Specialized Response May Be Used
• Mass Casualty Incident
Example

• “Facility Alert – Hazardous Materials Incident – Internal – Pharmacy – Please Stay Away From Area”

• “Security Alert – Infant Abduction – Pediatrics – Description of Missing Child”

• “Medical Alert – Sepsis Team – Emergency Department”
Terminating an Alert

Once the emergency situation has been resolved some alerts may need to be cancelled, the announcement terminating an emergency will be:

“All Clear” – Repeated 3 times via overhead page
## Crosswalk – Former Codes vs. New Alerts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Code</th>
<th>New Emergency Alert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code Red</td>
<td>Facility Alert + Fire Alarm + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Orange</td>
<td>Facility Alert + Hazardous Materials Incident + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Amber</td>
<td>Security Alert + Infant/Child Abduction + Location + Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Gray – Security Assist</td>
<td>Security Alert + Security Assistance + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Gray – Elopement</td>
<td>Security Alert + Patient Elopement + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Yellow</td>
<td>Security Alert + Suspicious Item / Bomb Threat + Location + Directions (as needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Silver – Hostage Situation</td>
<td>Security Alert + Hostage Situation + Location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code Silver – Active Shooter</td>
<td>Security Alert + Active Shooter + Location + Directions (as needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Triage</td>
<td>Medical Alert + Mass Casualty Incident + Location OR Facility Alert + Command Center Activation + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code White</td>
<td>Medical Alert + Pediatric Cardiac Arrest + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Blue</td>
<td>Medical Alert + Adult Cardiac Arrest + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Chill</td>
<td>Medical Alert + Hypothermia Response Team + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Stroke</td>
<td>Medical Alert + Stroke Response Team + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Sepsis</td>
<td>Medical Alert + Sepsis + Location</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code MH (Malignant Hyperthermia)</td>
<td>Medical Alert + Malignant Hyperthermia Response Team + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRT</td>
<td>Medical Alert + Rapid Response Team + Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Clear</td>
<td>All Clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>