



# Updating Emergency Codes to Plain Language Alerts

A movement to enhance communication during emergencies.

# What is plain language?

- Plain language is using common terminology/everyday terms instead of code names for an emergency alert.
- According to the Department of Homeland Security,
  - *“Plain language is communication that can be understood by the intended audience and meets the purpose of the communicator”.*
  - *An example of plain language is announcing, “Hazardous Spill” as opposed to “Code Orange”.*

Source: [https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/PlainLanguageFAQs\\_0.pdf](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/PlainLanguageFAQs_0.pdf)

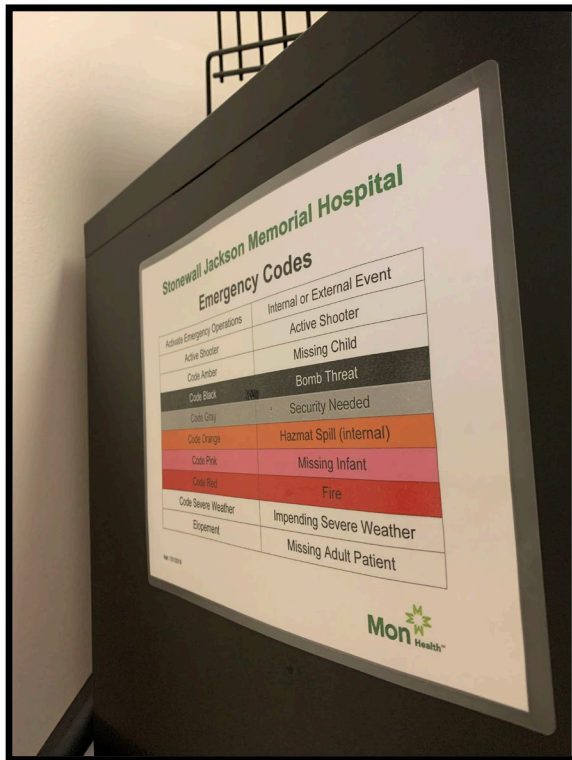
# A System Collaboration

- A team of representatives across Mon Health hospitals met to look at what emergency codes are currently in place at each facility.
  - *The team found that while we had some similar code terminology and practices, we had an opportunity to standardize our alerts to common terminology.*
- The team reviewed best practice in standardizing and moving to plain language.

# A Consistent Language

- The adoption of plain language has the support of the following organizations:
  - US Department of Health and Human Services
  - US Department of Homeland Security
  - The National Incident Management System
  - The Institute of Medicine
  - The Emergency Nurses Association
  - and others!

# Here's a Snapshot of Some of the Codes We Currently Utilize Across the System



References:  
 Applicability: *Mon Health Preston Memorial Hospital*

### Emergency Overhead Announcement Codes

**POLICY:**

Paging the appropriate codes in an emergency situation is necessary / mandatory to alert the entire hospital staff and public. (Standardized and consistent terminology has been utilized whenever possible). Keyboard Alert System (KAS) shall be used with all overhead page announcements due to speaker coverage. KAS provides a record of alert. The codes are as follows:

- Active Shooter:** An active shooter is in the hospital or on campus.
- Code Amber:** Indicates when an infant/child is missing or is known or suspected to have been kidnapped.
- Code Black:** Indicates a bomb threat.
- Code Blue:** Signifies a patient is in cardiac or respiratory arrest. Appropriate medical personnel are to report to the specified room or area at once.
  - Code Blue** will be announced if a pediatric patient is in cardiac or respiratory arrest.
- Code Gray:** Includes all situations requiring a quick response by security such as combative visitor/patient or an intruder in the facility.
  - Code Gray - Lockdown:** Indicates an immediate need for lockdown of the facility prior to other security measures being taken.
- Code Migrate:** Hospital evacuation is imminent. *See: Evacuation or Sheltering in Place*
  - Code Migrate - Horizontal Evacuation from \_\_\_ to \_\_\_:** Evacuation of staff and patients from one part of the hospital to another.
  - Code Migrate - Staging Total Evacuation from \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ (offsite location):** Total facility planned evacuation.
  - Code Migrate - Total Facility Evacuation to Outside:** Total emergent evacuation to parking lot zones.
- Code Orange:** The release or spill of any hazardous materials in the hospital environment.

**EMERGENCY: CALL 1234**

CODES	MEANINGS
Activate E.O.P.	Disaster/Emergency
Active Shooter	Active Shooter
Code Amber	Child Abduction
Code Armstrong	Lifting Assistance
Code Blue	Cardio Pulmonary Arrest
Code Gray	Violent Situation
Code Lockdown	Secure the Building
Code Migrate	Evacuation
Code Heart Level 1 & 2	Emergency Open Heart Surgery
Code Red	Fire
Code OB Stat	Transport to OR for Stat C-Section
Code Orange	HAZMAT Spill
Code Trauma P1 & P2	ER Trauma Patient
Code Triage Level 1 & 2	Mass Casualties
Code STEMI	ST Elevated Myocardial Infarction
Code Stroke	Stroke
Code Walker	Missing Patient
Code Weather	Weather Emergency
Rapid Response	Deteriorating Condition
Code Cool	Therapeutic Hypothermia
Code Black	Bomb Threat

**EMERGENCY: CALL 1234**  
 Give specific code and detail.  
 Dialing "0" may not have an immediate response.

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# Why change to plain language?

- When emergencies happen, communication is essential.
- Situational awareness is increased.
- Using common language allows visitors to understand and respond.

# When are we changing?

- **By December 1, 2021 we will be aligned across Mon Health to plain language alerts!**
  - This is to align with Mon Health Marion Neighborhood Hospital opening.
- Policies at each site and paging guides will be updated by December 1<sup>st</sup> to reflect the new plain language terminology.
- New tools, such as “quick reference cards” will be provided.

# A Description of the Changes

- Each plain language alert will be broken down into a **Facility Alert**, **Security Alert**, or **Medical Alert** category.

- The alert will have a standardized announcement format as pictured in the example.

## EXAMPLE:

### FACILITY ALERT



EVENT	RECOMMENDED PLAIN LANGUAGE
Decontamination	Facility Alert + Decontamination + Location + Directions
Evacuation/Relocation	Facility Alert + Evacuation + Location + Directions
Fire	Facility Alert + Fire + Location + Directions
Hazardous Material Release	Facility Alert + Threat + Location + Avoid the area
Mass Casualty	Facility Alert + Mass Casualty + Location + Directions
Utility/Technology Interruption	Facility Alert + Utility/Technology Interruption + Location + Directions
Weather	Facility Alert + Weather Event + Location + Directions

### SECURITY ALERT



EVENT	RECOMMENDED PLAIN LANGUAGE
Armed Subject	Security Alert + Threat + Location + Directions
Bomb Threat	Security Alert + Threat + Location + Directions
Civil Disturbance	Security Alert + Civil Disturbance + Location + Avoid the area
Controlled Access	Security Alert + Controlled Access + Location + Directions
Missing Person	Security Alert + Missing Person + Location + Directions
Security Assistance	Security Alert + Security Assistance + Location + Directions
Suspicious Package	Security Alert + Suspicious Package + Location + Directions

### MEDICAL ALERT



EVENT	RECOMMENDED PLAIN LANGUAGE
Medical Alert	Medical Alert + Medical Emergency + Location + Directions



# Here is a closer picture with examples of how announcements will flow in the hospitals...

## New Alert Announcement Format

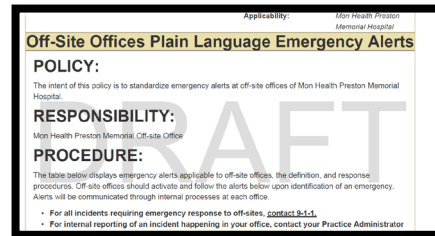
- **Facility Alert + Alert + Location + Directions**  
e.g. *“Facility Alert + Weather Alert + Directions”*
- **Security Alert + Alert + Location + Directions**  
e.g. *“Security Alert + Missing Person-Adult + Location + Directions”*
- **Medical Alert + Medical Emergency + Location + Directions**  
e.g. *“Medical Alert + Stroke + Emergency Department + Directions”*

For overhead paging within the Hospitals, utilize the following #s internally:

MHMC	PMH	SJMH
Dial “1234” to reach Console Attendant	Dial “6300” to reach Patient Access & Activate KAS	Dial “0” or “46”, if no immediate response, to overhead page

# Off-site Locations (Away from Hospital Buildings)

- Off-site locations will utilize plain language as well.
  - Use internal processes to communicate the hazard.
  - **Contact 9-1-1 for situations, as applicable.**
- See the **Off-site Offices Plain Language Emergency Alerts Policy** in PolicyStat for Your Hospital. (This will be live December 1<sup>st</sup>).



# What will remain the same?

- **Two Code Names Will Remain The Same:**
  - Code Red
  - Code Blue
  - This is because these two code names are widely known throughout the United States.
- **Two alerts were already in plain language and will remain the same:**
  - Active Shooter
  - Rapid Response
- **The above alerts will follow the new format in paging, i.e.:**
  - ***“Facility Alert + Code Red + Location + Directions”***

# What is changing?

- All other current emergency codes will change to plain language alerts. For example:

Previous Code Name	New Alert Name
Code Stroke	Stroke
Code OB Stat	OB Stat
Code STEMI	STEMI
Code Trauma Priority 1 & 2	Trauma Priority 1 & 2
Code Armstrong	Lifting Assistance
Code Triage Level 1 & 2	Mass Casualty Incident
Code Amber	Missing Person-Child/Infant
Code Walker/Elopement (SJM)	Missing Person-Adult
Code Black	Threat
Code Gray	Workplace Violence/Security Assistance
Code Lockdown	Lockdown
Activate Emergency Operations Plan	Emergency Operations Plan
Code Orange	Hazardous Spill
Code Migrate	Evacuation Plan

## One Change to Note:

**“Code Black” will change to “Threat” when announced. The policy will be “Bomb Threat.”**

- The overhead announcement will be paged as follows:
  - **“Security Alert + Threat + Location + Directions”**.
- The “all clear” announcement will be:
  - **“Security Alert + Threat + All Clear”**.
- The policy title will change to “Bomb Threat”.
- **WHY?**
  - The reason “bomb threat” is not included in the initial overhead announcement is to prevent panic until more information is obtained. This is one of the only announcements that does not provide the full description.

# Need More Information?

- This is an introductory presentation on moving to plain language codes.
- All policies will include new alert language on December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- There will be rounding education and tools developed to assist with the movement to plain language.

# Thank You!

- For more questions at your location, please reach out to any member of the System Collaborative:

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