

ASPR TRACIE Technical Assistance Request

Request Receipt Date (by ASPR TRACIE): 11 July 2017

Response Date: 14 July 2017; updated 6 February 2019

Type of TA Request: Standard

Request:

The requestor asked if ASPR TRACIE had any best practices, lessons learned, or other resources on plain language emergency alerts for hospitals. She noted that her hospital was transitioning from color and number codes to plain language emergency alerts.

Response:

The ASPR TRACIE Team conducted a search for resources related to plain language emergency alerts for hospitals. We also reached out to ASPR TRACIE Subject Matter Experts Cadre members to obtain any additional materials they have. Materials gathered are provided below.

I. Resources on Plain Language Emergency Alerts for Hospitals

Florida Hospital Association. (2014). [Overhead Emergency Codes 2014 Hospital Guidelines](#).

These guidelines provide recommendations to use plain language in many overhead hospital emergency codes. The two main goals of this document are to: 1) promote a revised set of standard, emergency overhead codes, both color-sets and plain language, based on a national review of best practice programs, activities and guidance aligned with previously released recommendations; and 2) convey appropriate criteria to increase implementation and use by hospitals in Florida.

Kentucky Hospital Association Emergency Preparedness Committee. (2011). [Kentucky Hospital Association Emergency Preparedness Committee Recommended Emergency Codes](#).

This document provides color and plain language codes used by healthcare facilities, and recommends that the use of other codes be standardized using common plain language or codes at the regional level where possible.

Minnesota Hospital Association. (2011). [Plain Language Emergency Overhead Paging: Implementation Toolkit](#).

This document includes recommendations for plain language emergency overhead paging. The Minnesota Hospital Association's core principles are to being transparent with patients and families and increase patient safety by standardizing safety practices across hospitals throughout Minnesota.

North Carolina Hospital Association. (n.d.). [Implementation Guide: Standardized, Plain Language Emergency Alerts](#). (Accessed 2/6/2019.)

The North Carolina Hospital Emergency Management Council and the North Carolina Hospital Association formed a task force to standardize emergency alert notifications. The proposed alerts are based on plain language communications, with three optional universal code color alerts remaining, and address the three types of events that occur in hospitals: facility alerts (i.e. hazardous material spills and fires), security alerts (i.e. active shooters and missing persons) and, medical events (i.e. visitor falls, cardiac or respiratory arrest).

Prickett, K.J., and Bellino, J. (n.d.). [White Paper. Plain Language Emergency Alert Codes: The Importance of Direct Impact Statements in Hospital Emergency Alerts](#). (Accessed 2/6/2019.)

This white paper addresses the implementation of plain language emergency alert code systems in healthcare facilities. The authors discuss how it will serve as a benefit to healthcare associates and external emergency responders, as well as patients and visitors, by reducing the amount of confusion and anxiety that is associated with code word or color emergency alerting systems.

South Carolina Hospital Association. (n.d.). [Plain Language Emergency Codes: Implementation Toolkit](#). (Accessed 2/6/2019.)

This document provides recommendations for hospitals when implementing plain language emergency alert codes. It also includes answers to frequently asked questions related to these codes.

Stanford Health Care. (2017). [Improved Emergency Communications and Transition to Plain Language](#).

Stanford Health Care and Stanford Children's Health worked on emergency communications across both health systems by simplifying instructions for emergency response through intuitive tools and plain language. This document addresses changes made for those healthcare systems to include plain language codes. **NOTE:** If the above hyperlink does not open, please copy and paste the following URL in your Internet browser: <https://stanfordhealthcare.org/content/dam/SHC/health-care-professionals/medical-staff/medstaff-weekly/20170510-huddle-guide.pdf>.