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**SAMPLE HOSPITAL POLICY: IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAIN-LANGUAGE EMERGENCY CODES**

**Subject**: Hospital Emergency Operations **Policy Number**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Effective Date**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Dates of Revision**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Authorized Approval**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Policy Name**: Standardized, Plain-Language Emergency Codes

**Purpose**: This policy is intended to provide all staff specific guidance and instruction on how to initiate a plain-language emergency code within the hospital.

**Policy Objectives**:

* Promote the safety of patients, visitors, physicians and hospital staff;
* Reduce errors;
* Increase transparency of communications and safety protocols;
* Align with national safety recommendations; and
* Reduce confusion for staff or physicians who work in more than one facility.

**Policy**: In the event of an emergency situation, a plain-language emergency code will be used to notify the appropriate individuals to initiate an immediate and appropriate response based on the hospital emergency operations plan. The emergency code activation may or may not include widespread notification, based on the incident and established emergency procedures.

**Procedures:**

1. Initiating an Emergency Code Call

When initiating an emergency code call, the [hospital name] employee should:

1. Initiate the notification process for the specific emergency, as outlined in the emergency operations plan;
2. Use the plain language code to reduce confusion; and
3. Use the established code script.
4. Facility Alert
   1. Bed capacity: “Facility Alert + Bed Capacity + Descriptor (location)”
   2. Emergency plan activation: “Facility Alert + Emergency Plan Activation + Descriptor (location)”
   3. Fire alarm activation: “Facility Alert + Fire Alarm Activation + Descriptor (location)”
   4. Hazardous spill: “Facility Alert + Hazardous Spill + Descriptor (location)”
5. Weather Alert
   1. Severe weather: “Weather Alert + Descriptor (threat/location) + Instructions”
6. Security Alert
   1. Armed violent intruder/active shooter/hostage: “Security Alert + Descriptor (threat/location)”
   2. Civil disturbance: “Security Alert + Descriptor (threat/location)”
   3. Combative patient/person: “Security Alert + Descriptor (threat/location)”
   4. Lockdown: “Security Alert + Descriptor (threat/location) + Instructions”
   5. Missing person: “Security Alert + Descriptor”
   6. Suspicious package: “Security Alert + Descriptor (threat/location)”
7. Medical Alert
   1. Code Blue
8. Terminating an Emergency Code
   * 1. Once the emergency situation has been effectively managed or resolved, and based on the emergency operations plan, the code should be canceled. An indication of “all clear” should be sent to all who received the initial notification. This command should be repeated three times.
     2. The cancelation notification should be sent via the same notification process as the initial code activation. For example, if the overhead paging system was used to activate the code, the overhead paging system also should be used to cancel the code.
9. Providing Competency-Based Staff Education

Competency-based education about the plain-language emergency codes should be provided to all employees during employee orientation and reviewed during annual life-safety updates. Physicians, public safety officers and other contract employees also should receive the education. Education should include the following:

1. Four categories of alerts (facility, weather, security, medical);
2. Immediate steps for emergency code activation and notification of appropriate personnel based on the [name of hospital] emergency operations plan; and
3. Specific responsibilities, based on their job description as written in the emergency operations plan.