

Emergency Codes at HGH

Introduction

- Standardized emergency colour codes have been introduced into Ontario Hospitals so no matter which hospital you are in, the code colours are the same.
- If you look at your name tag you will see that you have also been given a tap with all of the emergency codes on them So when you hear a code being called you can associate the colour with the meaning of the code.
- In this presentation we are going to review the codes and the colours associated with them

Code Black: Bomb Threat

A Code Black is called in response to a bomb threat or discovery of/or search for a suspicious object.

- When there is a bomb threat, a preliminary assessment is made by qualified personnel, such as the Police or Security, to establish the need for a full scale search. Once this is done a decision will be made as to the need for an evacuation of the department or facility.
- If a full scale search is called for, staff are asked to search their work areas to expedite the identification of objects that are foreign to the area and may be suspicious. If something suspicious is found, staff are asked not to touch the object and call Police or Security

Code Blue

A Code Blue is called when there is a medical emergency where the victim is experiencing an imminent loss of life.

- If the victim has no vital signs, initially basic and then advanced life support measures will be taken by qualified persons at the scene.
- HGH has a Code Blue team that will respond once the Code Blue has been called overhead on the paging system.

Code Brown: In-Facility Hazardous Spill

A Code Brown is called when there has been an accidental spill or release of a potentially hazardous, hazardous or cytotoxic material.

- HGH has a team that are specially trained to deal with cleaning up this type of spill or release.
- If a HGH employee deals with any of these materials in their daily work (ie: nursing & pharmacy with cytotoxic drugs; specialized chemicals in the laboratory setting), training to deal with spills will be provided.
- There may be the potential for an evacuation of specified area depending on what was spilled or released.

Code Green: Precautionary Evacuation

A Code Green is called to initiate an orderly evacuation of a certain area until a situation is contained.

- HGH has a Disaster Plan that would be initiated for such an event that spells out the order of evacuation ie the who, when, how, in what order and where to.
- As a staff member at HGH you should know where to locate a copy of the Disaster Plan.

There are a couple of types of evacuations:

- Horizontal Evacuation: evacuating to the same floor but another location.
- Vertical Evacuation: taking people to safety by having them 'go up' (ie: in response to flooding) or 'go down' (ie: in response to fire) in the building.

Code Green Stat

- Code Green Stat is called to initiate a complete and orderly evacuation of the building that may involve both horizontal and vertical types of evacuation.

Code Grey: Infrastructure Loss or Failure

A Code Grey is called to alert the organization that there has been an infrastructure loss or failure of substantial significance (ie a loss of both primary and backup energy or a flood that has affected the structure of the building).

- If the building or a location within the building has sustained damage a immediate relocation or evacuation may be needed to achieve a safe and secure environment.

A Code Grey – 'Button Down' means that the external air intakes and external doors of the facility are shut off / down in response to an external chemical incident outside the organization.

Code Orange: External Disaster

A Code Orange is designed to activate the HGH response to an external disaster where there will be an influx of patients requiring additional resources to manage the event.

- HGH has a External Disaster plan that will enable emergency department staff to clear beds, increase staffing levels, and establish triage areas as required.
- If the disaster requires decontamination procedures, a Code Orange: CBRN will be called indicating that chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear materials are involved.

Code Pink: Pediatric Medical Emergency

A Code Pink is designed to initiate a response to a child or infant who is experiencing a cardiac arrest or imminent loss of life.

- If the child/infant has no vital signs, basic life support should be initiated until the advance life support team arrives.
- All clinical HGH staff should have BLS skills.

Code Purple: Hostage Taking

A Code Purple is called when there is a hostage taking event.

- When this type of event happens it is recommended that staff, other patients and visitors are asked to leave the area where the incident is occurring and a restrictive parameter be set up by security or administrative staff.
- Police should then be called to take charge of the situation.

Code Red: Fire

A Code Red is called to alert staff that there is a fire in a certain area. The area involved will be noted when the Code Red is called overhead.

As staff your responsibility is to REACT:

R: Remove those in immediate danger

E: Ensure doors and windows are shut

A: Activate the fire alarms

C: Call to initiate the overhead call

T: Take patients to a safe area

Code White: Violent / Behavioural Situation

A Code White is called to initiate a response to a patient, visitor or staff member who is displaying violent or aggressive behaviour or who is threatening the same to themselves or others.

- The intended response is to deescalate the violence or behavioural issue with the involvement of a team who can keep staff safe (ie mental health team, nurses, orderlies, security, physicians)
- Police may have to be called in some incidences.

Code Yellow: Missing Patient

A Code Yellow is called when a patient has a unauthorized absence from the unit/hospital and a comprehensive search is required before the patients safety and well being is compromised.

- An assessment of the patients level of risk is done initially by the staff / Police involved in the search and an action plan is generated (ie is the patient at risk of harming themselves or others)

Your Action Plan

- So what do you need to do to prepare yourself in the event of a specific code being called?
- Pay attention in the environment that you work in so that you recognize objects that are out of the ordinary.
- If you work with hazardous or cytotoxic material make sure you are familiar with how to do so safely. Everyone should be familiar with WHMIS at the very least.
- Know where the Fire Alarms are located in the areas where you work
- Know how to access the HGH Disaster Plan.