



**The Park at Allens Creek
132 Allens Creek Road
Rochester, NY 14618**

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**Monroe County Medical Society
Quality Collaborative**

Community-wide Plain Language Emergency Codes

In an effort to increase public safety, the three Rochester health care systems – Rochester General and Unity Health Systems, and the University of Rochester Medical Center are using “plain language” codes to communicate emergency situations in their hospitals. These codes replaced the traditional color codes that were used previously. Rochester General, Strong Memorial and Highland hospitals transitioned to the new codes in January 2012. Unity Health System adopted its plain language alert system in September 2009.

In December 2009, several hospitals came to the Monroe County Medical Society (MCMS) Quality Collaborative to ask that it consider leading an effort to have consistent overhead emergency pages used throughout the area. After examining activities throughout the country, and hearing about the success Unity Health System had with implementation of its system, the hospitals agreed to work towards the adoption of a set of plain language terms to be used for an emergency. Each hospital sought input from its clinical and administrative leaders and a common set of plain language pages was developed.

Monroe County is among the first in the country to adopt one consistent set of plain language codes. The adoption of a uniform emergency code by all providers will enhance the safety of patients, visitors and healthcare providers. While previously used alerts like Code Blue, Code Red and Code Yellow may have sounded familiar, there was no uniform standard as to what they meant. The lack of consistency in the codes used across the nation, region, or even within a health care system created the potential for confusion. In Monroe County hospitals alone, 49 different codes were used to announce various incidents like Infant Abduction, Medical Emergency or Fire.

The plain language alerts make it easy for patients, visitors and staff to understand the emergency. It also eliminates the need for healthcare workers, who may work in multiple organizations, to memorize the various hospital emergency codes. In addition, it brings all of the area hospitals in further compliance with the National Incident Management System, a system developed by the US Department of Homeland Security.

On the following page is a list of the plain language codes adopted by the Monroe County hospitals:



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Plain Language

Condition

Fire Alert (followed by <u>location</u>)	Fire alarm received
Fire Alert Confirmed (followed by <u>location</u>)	Actual fire condition
Code Team (followed by <u>location</u>)	Adult cardiac/respiratory emergency
Pediatric Code Team (<u>location</u>)	Pediatric cardiac/respiratory emergency
Amber Alert (description)	Infant/Toddler (can't walk unaccompanied)
Assistance Needed ... STAT or Security) (<u>location</u>)	Behavioral/Uncontrolled person incident
Critical Security Incident (<u>location</u>)	Critical Security Incident (weapon, bomb threat, active shooter)
Lockdown	Facility Lock Down and/or Shelter in Place
Command Center Activated (leadership to respond or place)	Disaster (Internal or community, natural or manmade)
Decontamination Team Alert	Hazardous Material Spill/Release-Decontamination Needed
All Clear	Situation Resolved