

## Plain Language Emergency Alerts Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why is the Alaska Native Health Campus changing from using color codes to plain language for emergency alerts?**

ANTHC is committed to increasing patient, employee, and visitor safety during an emergency. Color codes are not standardized across health care systems and can lead to confusion and inappropriate responses.

### **What is meant by plain language?**

Plain language is the use of everyday words to describe an emergency in a way that a broad audience (staff, patients, and visitors) can understand the first time the information is received. The communication is both clear and concise and follows best practice, especially in emergency situations.

### **What is an example of a plain language announcement?**

Instead of hearing, “Code Red: 5 East, room 507”, you will instead hear, “Facility alert: smoke and fire, 5 East, room 507. Avoid the area”. The use of “Code Red” is removed and the emergency is described as smoke and fire, so everyone can easily understand what the emergency is and respond appropriately. The announcement will often provide instructions, when necessary, such as “avoid the area”.

### **Is my role in the response going to change?**

No. You will continue to respond, as appropriate, to the emergency per emergency response procedures according to your role.

### **Will I get a new badge buddy?**

Yes. Human Resources will print new badge buddies and they will be distributed to all staff. If you do not receive a new badge buddy, please contact HR.

### **Will plain language cause distress or fear with patients and visitors?**

No. Don't panic! There is a trend across the health care industry to standardize emergency alerts, as recommended by the Joint Commission in 2012. The decision to adopt plain language, except *Code Blue* for adult/pediatric/newborn resuscitation, was proactive and based on literature, research, and early trends among hospitals to promote transparency and safety.

### **Why is Code Blue being kept as an emergency alert?**

Code Blue is a common alert known among employees and is widely known across the health care industry. Code Blue will now be separated into three separate codes: *Code Blue Adult*, *Code Blue Pediatric*, and *Code Blue Newborn*.

### **When does the plain language emergency alerts initiative become effective?**

We will transition from emergency color codes to plain language emergency alerts on Tuesday, April 30, 2024.

