



Patient Security System Newsletter

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Identifying Alarms

I am not a fisherman. To me, most fish in Michigan lakes and streams look the same. I know enough fisherman friends to know that fish are easily identifiable. Fishermen take a quick look at color, fins, shape and know exactly what type of fish they are looking at. Not only that, but as soon as they identify them, they know exactly which bait to use. Knowing the difference makes a difference.

To the untrained eye, it may seem that all alarms produced by your Patient Security System (PSS) appear to be the same. However, for those who know their PSS, they understand there are obvious and important differences between each type of alarm!

Clear Information

When your PSS needs your attention, it will issue an alarm. The alarm will cause the PSS computer to display the Alarm Screen (or if using the Hugs Wi-Fi System, the Instant Notifier will appear) which displays a map of the protected area, and gives important written information about what is happening. The computer also announces the alarm audibly.

Information about the alarm appears on your Alarm Screen/Instant Notifier. The system will always give you the type of alarm that is being displayed to assist in your response. If patient information is associated with the tag, you will see that information along with the alarm. If patient information has not been added, only the tag number will be displayed.

Depending on how your system is configured, you may see procedures for clearing specific alarms paired with information on tag location or tag's last location. You may also have the ability to add notes about the situation before clearing the alarm.

Different Meaning

The reason this information is displayed assists users so that alarms can be addressed in an efficient manner and abductions can be prevented.

Not all alarms are created equal. Higher level alarms indicate someone might be taking a baby or a patient might be attempting to leave. Other alarms are lower level and indicate that a situation exists that, if not attended to, could escalate into a higher level alarm.

- Higher level alarms mean that there is a significant risk to the security of a patient. For example: a protected patient is near an open perimeter door, or a tag strap has been damaged, or a tag remains significantly loose.
- A lower level alarm, often called an event, is usually asking for something simple to satisfy the PSS, like close a door, finish admitting patient information, or snug up a tag that became loose.

Different Response

High level alarms call for all hands on deck. A patient could potentially be at risk. At some facilities, the staff moves toward key exit points to insure that no protected patients leave the unit while other staff moves to verify the patient's safety and location.

Lower level alarms (events) are asking staff to do something so that a more complicated or dangerous situation does not arise.

Obviously, it is in your department's, as well as the patient's, best interest for your staff to respond to alarms and events immediately. High level alarms, because a patient could be at risk. Lower level alarms (events), because by responding to a small situation now, they can avoid a larger situation later.

Different Resolution

In order to clear a high level alarm, staff responds to strobes and chimes in the corridor by checking the PSS computer for detailed information about the "Type" of alarm and "Description" of the patient involved.

Once staff verifies the patient's safety and location, they return to the PSS computer, login, enter an alarm note describing the cause and/or correction of the alarm and then click the clear button (LonWorks) or "save and dismiss" (Wi-Fi) to end the alarm.

In order to clear a lower level event, staff responds to flashing strobes in the corridor by checking the PSS computer to discover what type of event they are experiencing.

Once staff does whatever the PSS is asking them to do (close a door, complete an auto admit box, etc.) the event will immediately auto-clear. Staff does NOT need to login to the computer to clear it.

Similar But Different

To my untrained eye, one type of fish looks like the others. But I know very well they are different. I have simply not bothered to identify them.

PSS Alarms may seem similar, but a closer look shows significant differences in appearance, meaning, response and resolution. Your staff will have an easier time managing their PSS, and your patients will be safer, if your staff learns to identify each type of alarm and responds appropriately. Knowing the difference makes a difference.

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