



Patient Security System Newsletter

HUGS—PEDZ—PASSPORT

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Responding to Exit Alarms

“Papa” is my favorite title in the world by far, and my grandchildren are amazing! I have three grandsons and one granddaughter. Ruthi is barely two but her Papa has diagnosed her as a baby genius.

Last Sunday, we had a bustling Sunday dinner with eleven family members here, there and everywhere. There is no way I can keep track of all of them. But it was not all that hard for Ruthi.

It seemed like every couple of minutes Ruthi would catch my attention and say somebody’s name with a question mark. I would look around the dining room and notice that particular person had left the room. Of course, Ruthi’s question was her effort at finding out where they had gone. I could rarely answer her question but Ruthi never failed to alert me every single time someone left the dining room.

See? Baby genius! I just knew you would agree! On Sunday, Ruthi was issuing exit alarms. Whenever a family member left the dining room, she would alert me.

What Is an Exit Alarm?

Your Patient Security System (PSS) may be every bit as brilliant as my Ruthi (I’m smiling). A primary function of your PSS is to let you know immediately when a protected patient has had an opportunity to leave the safe area. We call that an Exit Alarm.

In order to generate an Exit Alarm, two things must be true: 1) a protected patient is near a protected exit and 2) that protected exit is open. If the patient is near the exit and the door is closed, there will be no Exit Alarm.

It’s worth noting here that an Exit Alarm does not necessarily mean that a protected patient has left the Safe Area. It simply means that they had an OPPORTUNITY to leave. The perimeter door was open while the protected patient was nearby.

How Do We Respond to Exit Alarms?

Sounding the Exit Alarm is your PSS calling for action. Your dedicated PSS computers will be announcing the Exit Alarm. Depending upon your setup, you may have lights flashing and/or chimes sounding in your corridors. Once your staff is alerted, they should begin responding according to the protocol you have established in your policies and procedures.

Your PSS computers announcements, strobing lights and sounding chimes are a general alarm for your staff. To learn the specific details of the alarm, one or more staff members will need to:

1. Go to the PSS computer to identify which patient is in alarm and which exit is involved. Note: The exit will be highlighted in red on the map.
2. Go to that exit, locate your patient, bring them back into the Safe Area and/or move them away from the protected exit or and, if needed, close the door.
3. Login to your PSS computer and enter an accurate Alarm Note or Corrective Action, as required.
4. Clear or Dismiss the Exit Alarm.

During a Fire Alarm, state law prohibits doors from being locked. Many facilities

choose to move additional staff to positions where they are able to visually monitor all stairwells, elevators and exits during fire alarms. If someone activates a fire alarm to cause confusion and to keep doors from locking while they exit, your PSS will still issue an Exit Alarm.

Of course, if staff determines this is an abduction attempt, they will follow your protocol and notify Hospital Security and/or proper authorities.

Evaluating Staff Response

After the patient is found and safe, it is important to evaluate sitewide response to the alarm. Some sites involve leaders from nursing, security, PBX and others departments to gain a broader perspective on speed of response, involvement of appropriate staff, following written protocol, etc. Much is to be gained by thorough evaluation. So, avoid just breathing a sigh of relief and relaxing after an alarm. Gain as much as possible from each event.

Reducing Exit Alarms

Most Exit Alarms are not caused by abduction attempts. Reduce nuisance alarms by educating patients and caregivers to stay a reasonable distance from protected exits, redirecting patient flow away from busy exits and reminding staff to utilize Transport and Discharge functions prior to leaving the Safe Area with protected patients.

Written by Jeff Smalla, Corporate Trainer, IMS

Precision In Process

What happens after you send in a PO for an order to IMS? Our precise process and detailed attention comes into play. The PO takes a journey of checks and double checks. Our goal is always customer focused and we strive to make sure your product arrives within an acceptable time frame. One of the IMS team members, Marlene Feistamel, makes sure the wheels turn smoothly for IMS when placing your order. She has worked for IMS for 14 years and brings a lot of joy to our organization! Her commitment to our customers to make sure we deliver what we say is unparalleled. [Continue the story>](#)

