



Patient Security System Newsletter

HUGS—PEDZ—PASSPORT

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All Hands On Deck

My knuckles were white as I grasped the side rail of our boat. The small aluminum skiff was our only refuge from the black and unpredictable water that surrounded our crew. Like a stampede of elephants crashing into our starboard side, the waves tossed us to and fro.

There were a hundred motivations for getting into the boat that day, each one a wild Alaskan salmon. The summer job was supposed to be an adventure, but the catch was sparse, and the weather was bad. We were losing money and hemorrhaging morale... until that day.

We had been working hard like we do every day, pulling salmon into the boat, until, exhausted and desperately, Matt turned his face upward and bellowed, "Help!" Andy and I stopped what we were doing, rushed over to Matt and started pulling net like our life depended on it.

A Tug of War with the sea, our breaking point was fast approaching. We all began leaning into the boat, hoping our body weight would break the net free. Our hands began to burn as the sea tugged the net back. It felt as though our arms could break off from our shoulders at any second. We were fighting for mere inches.

Then something changed. As we gave one last tug, the net started to pour into the boat with ease. "Had the sea really forfeit?" We won! Weather, waves, and a battle for our net, this was victory. Now it was time to claim our prize.

Despite our cocktail of environmental challenges, we continued pulling the net into our boat, recovering as many salmon possible. It wasn't two minutes or eleven inches of net before we discovered our true adversary in the battle prior.

I can remember how the line shook in my hands and the erratic twisting of the net as the beast struggled just beyond the bow. With a single pull, we saw the creature's black beak appear over the railing of our boat. With another pull its long silver body became more and more visible. This was no fish, it was leviathan. With one final tug of our net the entire thing entered our boat and hit the deck with a loud thud. A commotion of excitement erupted from Matt and Andy, "Do you know what this is...?"

The three of us worked together to catch the king of all king salmon. This one catch changed the trajectory of our brutal summer job, making it a true adventure.

Catching a King salmon might be rare, and hopefully high-level Alarms from your Patient Security System are also rare (Exit, Tag Loose, Tamper, and Supervision). You may have encountered one or more of these during in the last month or year. You hear the chime and see the lights flashing overhead and/or at the computer. The phone may also ring with security on the other end. How do you respond?

POLICY

Your hospital's Patient Security System policy should always dictate the proper response to these alarms. In their most basic state, the first response is to always find and make sure that the patient is safe "**BEFORE CLEARING THE ALARM**". Unfortunately, I have often hear that the first response is that the staff will roll their eyes and walk over to the Patient Security System's dedicated computer, look at the screen and whisper, "How do I get this thing off?" Truth be told, some days you're just trying to keep this ship from sinking and you feel like you don't need another alarm to get in the way.

On some units, alarms occur so often from so many systems, there is nothing alarming about them. To forfeit patient security for the quick fix is a dangerous mistake to make. In other words, your high-level Alarms occur for a reason. It is important to respond as a team to avoid any chance of a grim outcome. Alarms exist to mobilize your team against potential abductions or elopements, so, we need to react like one has happened.

Consider developing procedures unique to each Alarm. The Alarm goes off. A staff member has just checked the Patient Security System's dedicated computer. They know which patient is experiencing the Alarm and what type of Alarm it is. What does your team do? Create a Policy for them to follow and check to make sure it is followed.

RESPONSE

If you have an Exit Alarm, first direct your team to the exit indicated on the map. Typically, the doors won't lock and your access controls are

not disabled during an Exit Alarm. This allows your team to pursue the patient and keep eyes on any abductors. If needed, you might consider sending a staff member to the patient's room. If this is an abduction, you will want to recover any time sensitive information, such as a family members description of the patient before they left the room.

With an Exit Alarm, you know your patient is not where they are supposed to be. With Supervision, Tag Loose, and Tamper Alarms you must send a staff member to the patient's room first to make sure they are safe. Team work starts when the tag is initially applied. This is the reason for entering the patient's last name, room #, and gender in the admit box after the tag is applied. As you know this information is the first thing you'll see when an Alarm occurs, and it is critical for a swift response. Also, depending on the type of alarm, you may look in the room for a discarded tag on the floor.

In some hospitals, a Fire Alarm mobilizes staff to each exit. A Patient Security System Alarm can trigger the same response. If a tag has been cut off or removed, you may want staff at your exits to recover any patients on the move.

Remember to communicate with security for each Alarm. They brought tasers and you left yours at home. Security is an incredible resource on your team. Security staff is trained to secure your entire hospital, so don't ignore their call. When security calls your unit, they want to know how they can help. Communicate clearly with them about the timing needed to respond to alarms before they respond to the floor and have it documented in your policy.

Alarm response is an "**All Hands On Deck**" situation. Making sure everyone knows their role when responding to high-level Alarms is vital. Our crew wouldn't have recovered that massive king salmon if we didn't know our roles on that boat. When Matt asked for help, Andy and I helped. We knew exactly where to grab the net and where we needed to stand in that boat as not to stifle our crew members progress. Does your staff know their role on your team?

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