



# QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO STANDARDIZED HOSPITAL PLAIN LANGUAGE STATE OF LOUISIANA



## Purpose

The purpose of the adoption of the recommended plain language in Louisiana is to:

- Increase transparency during emergency events leading to a safer environment for patients, staff, and visitors ultimately reducing liability of hospitals;
- Ensure that staff working at multiple facilities understands what to do during an emergency; and
- Coordinate with neighboring states for a consistent approach to emergency communication in disasters.

**The adoption of plain language is a recommendation only.** Hospitals may choose to adopt any portion of the recommendations based on their institutional needs. This document will provide guidance to help facilities understand:

1. The types of facility alerts;
2. How plain language can be used to supplement the existing standardized emergency color codes; and
3. Suggested plain language for consideration.

## Process

A committee of hospital representatives and designated regional coordinators reviewed other state’s adopted policies, templates, and research to determine the recommendations outlined below. The goal of the committee was to keep the recommendations simple, consistent with the standardized color codes, and easy to implement by all hospitals across the state.

Hospital emergency color codes fall under one of three categories for alerts within a facility: medical alerts, facility alerts and security alerts.

	Medical Alerts	Facility Alerts	Security Alerts
<b>Louisiana’s Standardized Color Codes</b>	Code Blue Code Yellow	Code Red Code Grey Code Orange	Code Pink Code Black Code Silver Code White
<b>Other emergencies in which color codes may vary by facility</b>	Medical Decontamination	Outages – IT, Utilities Training Codes	Missing Adult Elopement Secured Access or Facility Lockdown

## MEDICAL ALERTS

Provide notification to staff of need for medical care and support to patients and incident victims. The goal is for providing continuous care in a safe environment during an incident.

- The “Code Blue” is widely used and accepted as a code in which plain language is not needed to supplement the notification.

Current LA Hospital Code <sup>1</sup>	Potential Plain Language
<b>CODE YELLOW</b> Disaster-Mass Casualty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Medical Alert + Mass Casualty + Internal Facility (Location) + Descriptor”</li> </ul>
<b>CODE ORANGE</b> Hazardous Materials, External or Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Medical Alert + HazMat/Medical Decontamination + Descriptor (Location and Action)”</li> </ul>

## FACILITY ALERTS

Provide timely notification of an incident to patients, staff, and visitors to maintain a safe and secure environment while managing essential facility functions.

Current LA Hospital Code <sup>1</sup>	Potential Plain Language
<b>CODE RED</b> Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Code Red + Descriptor (Location)”</li> <li>▪ “Fire Alarm + (Location)” (and as appropriate, action for staff/patient/visitors)</li> </ul>
<b>CODE GREY</b> Severe Weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Weather Alert + Descriptor (Threat/Location) + Instruction”</li> <li>▪ “Facility Alert + Weather Event + (Location) + Directions”</li> </ul>
<b>CODE ORANGE</b> Hazardous Materials, Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Facility Alert + Hazardous Spill + Descriptor (Location and Action)”</li> </ul>

## SECURITY ALERTS

Protect staff, patients, and visitors from situations posing a threat to the facility and persons within. These are usually human caused incidents.

- The “Code Black” for a bomb threat is determined to be a code that should remain unannounced to eliminate panic and therefore is recommended to not be augmented with plain language nor announced overhead.

Current LA Hospital Code <sup>1</sup>	Potential Plain Language
<b>CODE PINK</b> Infant/Child Abduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Code Pink + Descriptor (Age) + Descriptor (Threat/Location)”</li> <li>▪ “Security Alert + Descriptor (Threat/Location) + Descriptor (Age)”</li> <li>▪ “Security Alert + Descriptor”</li> </ul>
<b>CODE WHITE</b> Security Alert – Combative Person Without Weapon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Security Alert + Security Assistance Requested + (Location)”</li> <li>▪ “Security Assistance Requested + (Location) + Action Required”</li> </ul>
<b>CODE SILVER</b> Active Shooter – Combative Person with Weapon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Security Alert + Descriptor (Threat/Location)”</li> <li>▪ “Facility Alert + Active Shooter + Descriptor (Location)”</li> </ul>