Emergency Preparedness and The Joint Commission

Addressing Joint Commission Requirements with e.Notify

For more than 30 years, The Joint Commission has required healthcare providers to have strong emergency management protocols and a record of practicing those through drills, exercises, and scenario-based training.

The Joint Commission's most recent set of standards and guidelines can be found on the publicly accessible www.jointcommission.org website. Below you'll find a list of documents that represent some of the best of America's knowledge, suggestions and requirements for exceptional preparation and response to emergency situations by our world-class healthcare organizations and the communities that they serve.

- "Elements of Performance for EC.4.10," in a document referred to as "2006 Hospital Accreditation Standards for Emergency Management Planning, Emergency Management Drills, Infection Control and Disaster Management"

- "Standing Together: An Emergency Planning Guide for America's Communities"

- "Healthcare at the Crossroads: Strategies for Creating and Sustaining Community-wide Emergency Preparedness Systems"

As you will note when reviewing the wealth of information on The Joint Commission's site, an area that repeatedly stands out is efficient and effective communications. As other studies have shown, preparation and communications before and during an event are primary keys to success. The Joint Commission focuses on these areas, and requires that organizations plan for efficiency, effectiveness in collaboration amongst team members and departments, and streamlined processes for dissemination of critical information while maintaining the ability to capture and report results. The more planning and education within the organization prior to critical events directly relates to a successful organizational response. When the event unfolds, the strength, efficiency and effectiveness of communications between and amongst all parties involved will in large part define how well personnel can complete the plan.

While the standards and the potential event scenarios may seem daunting, exceptional event and incident communications management technology makes certification easier while improving your emergency preparedness. Technology solutions from Amcom Software have been specifically designed based on decades of experience in mission-critical healthcare communications to assist healthcare organizations in preparing for and realizing their own emergency event response objectives as well as complying with The Joint Commission's standards.

The following section describes The Joint Commission's requirements and how Amcom Software's sophisticated tools for critical communications, emergency event management, notification and response processing can help you and your organization meet The Joint Commission's standards while providing exceptional services to your communities.

THE JOINT COMMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND AMCOM SOLUTIONS

The plan provides for a process of notifying staff when emergency measures get started.

Through the development and implementation of organizational and department-specific communications templates, the full communications plans for every critical area can be built and managed within the on-line enterprise. In real time, any number of singular or inter-related "call trees" can be activated automatically or manually. Amcom™ e.Notify™ communicates within a secure, two-way channel with recipients based on their organizational role and according to the specific response plan requirements. The software uses dynamic, real-time recipient lists and/or predetermined hierarchical structures to reach multiple contacts via multiple devices throughout an event as needed. Each recipient can be assigned a role through the use of personnel record and/or on-call scheduling, with escalations for primary, secondary, tertiary and other contacts based on availability and/or response status. Personal device escalation preferences by time of day and day of week can also be used to ensure that each person assigned to a role within the response plan will be contacted based on his or her preferences. Another key element for success is the ability to quickly and efficiently gather specific personnel on conference bridges and web-based collaboration tools. e.Notify supports these requirements without limitation and from within the same incident template.

The plan must provide a proven and constantly improving process for organizational response and recovery, including a description of how, when, and by whom the phases are activated as well as detailed results reporting and monitoring of all procedures and steps taken.

e.Notify can notify all staff and authorities and direct them through two-way communications of assigned tasks and action results. All organizational, department and individual role/recipient communications, task lists and actions are captured, executed, escalated if needed, and monitored within pre-defined or ad-hoc templates. Detailed logs of every action and response, data archiving and sophisticated detail reporting are all fully supported by the e.Notify platform. Open, standards-based access and secure customer control of all system areas are hallmarks of Amcom solutions.

The plan has a process for notifying external authorities about emergencies.

e.Notify provides the ability to integrate with multiple data sources—both internal and external—to the organization to enable community-wide coordinated response. Integrated or agency-specific templates can be used on an unlimited basis.

The plan provides a process for identifying and managing staff to cover all essential staff functions during an emergency.

e.Notify lets you capture all required roles, functions, procedures, and steps within event templates. In this way, you can make e.Notify match your proven and evolving response procedures to the system—as opposed to the other way around. Each procedure and step can be associated with one or more roles, departments, individuals or groups, with dependencies and escalation points as required. You can use two-way communications within each area, and also have the ability to capture any conference bridge or web collaboration information that you have either planned ahead of time or determined during the event. On-call scheduling and e.Notify allow you to exactly match your org chart and assign individuals and groups to departments, tasks and interdependent roles within one or more scenarios. This system further enables capturing all communications requirements based on availability status, resource status, escalation rules, and all communications methods including phone calls, emails, data messaging, and wireless systems. Personal device lists and escalation rules further enable each recipient to define how and when they should be contacted.

The plan has a strategy for evacuating buildings.

Evacuation procedures and communications can be handled as separate procedures and steps within any number of event templates. Activations can be via manual or fully automated mechanisms, including rules-based logic. Amcom Software's "Alarms Monitoring" software enables automation of emergency notifications when alarms are triggered, thresholds are passed, or when other hospital systems "decide" that an evacuation of one or more geographic locations is necessary. Through the use of two-way messaging, evacuation status down to the individual is possible and can be monitored in real time. In the case where a team of personnel must be gathered to evaluate the situation before the evacuation order is issued, the e.Notify system enables chronological, timer-based procedure definition for one or more groups to be notified and automatically transferred into one or more conference bridge and/or web collaboration tools prior to automatic or manual activation of the subsequent notification and response procedures.

The plan provides a process for identifying care providers and other personnel.

The relational database management system integrated into the healthcare network, the e.Notify application, and the embedded on-call scheduling capabilities give healthcare providers a global look at where their staff is and how to best reach them based on the consolidation and real-time integration with any number of organizational data sources. These systems have been fully certified and in production in the most sophisticated healthcare and government facilities for decades. In addition, the introduction of RFID and RTLS capabilities further improves total situational awareness for personnel and equipment resources.

The plan identifies backup internal and external communications systems in event of failure during emergencies.

e.Notify systems include the ability to leverage all available networks—voice and data—to ensure optimal traffic routing and system resource availability. This includes the ability to use alternate systems, networks, and routes to achieve total redundancy of all required components. All application templates and supporting communications infrastructure connections fully support unlimited resiliency, backup and redundancy capabilities, including but not limited to clustering, high availability, multi-master replication, hot/standby and load sharing as required.

The Incident Command System (ICS) standard requires alternate roles be outlined for staff during emergencies, among them whom they report to in the command structure.

Users of e.Notify can build organizational, departmental, and individual hierarchies within any or all event templates as needed. Central to this requirement, the e.Notify platform fully supports the definition and use of role and function as well as on-call designation within recipient lists and groups. Escalation rules to alternates can be multi-tiered and can be based on timing thresholds and/or response parameters, including an individual's response to a specific question or set of questions as required within their role.

The plan requires communicating with alternate care sites.

e.Notify can be used to contact alternate sites such as clinics, public health facilities and other institutions. Many current customers operate in centralized and partnership environments where inter-communication requirements must be fully addressed for coordinated and assistive response.

Channels should be available for the exchange of information.

Two-way communication is important in any emergency. Employees contacted through e.Notify have the ability to fully respond to any and all role-specific questions, be placed automatically within designated and role-specific conference bridges or web collaboration meetings, and can be queried for a wide variety of decision and escalation driven answers ranging from simple acknowledgement of the assignment or message to full intelligent voice and data conversations containing multiple queries and possible responses. These interactive and fully configurable scripts are used to communicate with roles, functions, groups or individuals via any two-way capable device.

For more information about any of Amcom's applications, including e.Notify, please call (888) 337-9274 or visit www.amcomsoftware.com.