

Policy and Procedure

Department: Emergency Preparedness	Section: CODES	Subject: Code Purple - Hostage Taking
Policy:	Original Date: 2011-01-31	Supersedes: 2016-12-05
Last Reviewed: 2025-08-25	Next Review Date: 2026-08-25	Approver: Angie Brunetti (Emergency Preparedness Committee)

POLICY STATEMENT

Code Purple is the term used to declare hostage taking. The Code Purple policy is a risk management strategy used to ensure Espanola Regional Hospital and Health Centre (ERHHC) employees are able to react appropriately in a hostage situation, in order to ensure the safety and protection of staff, patients, residents and visitors. The plan is reviewed, tested and evaluated annually by the Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC).

The announcement of Code Purple will **not result in other hospital workers coming to assist**, as it is designed to keep people away from harm. Police will be contacted as soon as Code Purple is called and will assume management of the incident upon arrival. Code White (Violent/Behavioral Situation), and Code Silver (Threatening Weapon) may escalate to a Code Purple, as well as a Code Black (Bomb Threat/Suspicious Object) involving armed assailants.

If a coordinated emergency response by several agencies is required, consult the Town of Espanola Emergency Plan.

AUTHORITY TO DECLARE

Any staff member can initiate a Code Purple by calling 911 or activating the panic alarm system (portable or hardwired) OR by dialing 7777 (**ED Incident Command Centre**) when staff observe or are told of a hostage situation.

*If the hostage taking is in the ED - **Dial Switchboard (0)** to relay information and announce the code.

DEFINITIONS

Incident Command Centre: The central command and control location/group responsible for carrying out the principles of emergency preparedness and emergency management functions at a strategic level in an emergency, and ensuring the continuity of vital operations

Incident Commander (IC): The most responsible person at the time of an emergency. This person will depend on the time of day and may change as the situation progresses. The ED Ward Clerk may initiate the process during daytime hours, until relieved by the ED Nurse, or the most responsible person (e.g. Senior Manager or OPP).

Emergency Codes that may escalate into a Code Purple:

Emergency Code	Reason for Escalation
Code White/Silver	May escalate to a Code purple if violent person or armed assailant barricades victim in an enclosed area
Code Black	Bomb threat emergencies could involve armed assailants, requiring additional police presence

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees

- Review the emergency plan annually and when changes are made, ensuring understanding of the roles and processes.
- Participate in mock exercises, debriefs and educational programs as required

Managers:

- Review the emergency plans upon new staff orientation, annually and when changes are made, ensuring understanding of the roles and processes.
- Participate in mock exercises and attend educational programs as required
- Ensure all employees review and can respond competently in an emergency situation
- Ensure employees attend scheduled education programs or training opportunities

Emergency Preparedness Lead/Committee:

- Review and update the policy annually
- Coordinate and conduct mock drills as required
- Review of all Code Action reports for process improvement opportunities

Incident Commander (ED Nurse or CEO/Senior Leader, until relieved by OPP)

- Assume responsibility for initiating and/or overseeing the situation until relieved
- Communicate with staff, visitors, clients and partners, and ensure others are prevented from accessing the area
- Determine the need for local evacuation
- Ensure complete documentation (census sheets, checklist, Code Action Report)

Any communication to the public will be vetted by the CEO or delegate, in collaboration with OPP

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

- If possible, press panic alarm immediately OR call 911 to initiate police response.
- Dial 7777 from any hospital phone and provide Incident Command (IC) specific instructions as to where the Code Purple is located i.e., the department and specific room/location.
 - E.g. Code Purple, Main Entrance, Lab waiting area

When relaying information to police or IC, include details such as location, room number, number, names and description of hostage takers, number and names of hostages, any weapons etc.

RESPONSE PROCEDURE

IF A HOSTAGE CALL IS RECEIVED:

- Listen for key information including names and demands of hostage takers(s), name(s) of hostage(s), and weapons involved. Do not attempt negotiations with hostage takers. Listen, cooperate and answer questions.
- Call or delegate someone to call 911 to initiate police response
- Notify the department manager or delegate, and CEO as soon as possible.

IF YOU ARE TAKEN HOSTAGE:

- Remain calm, be polite, and cooperate. Do not speak unless spoken to.
- Stay away from windows and doors.
- Mentally plan an escape route, but do not attempt to escape unless there is an extremely good chance of survival, or the situation has seriously deteriorated.
- Be observant; try to remember information about the number of captors, conversations, weapons, and information about any other hostages.
- If a rescue is taking place, do not assume the police will know you are a hostage. Stay on the floor with your hands on your head and do not make any fast moves.

IF YOU OBSERVE A HOSTAGE SITUATION AND ARE NOT IN DANGER, **EVACUATE**

- Do not confront a person with a weapon
- Do not speak to the hostage taker unless spoken to
- If it is safe to do so, leave the area as quickly as possible. Do not draw attention to yourself. Leave your belongings behind and keep your hands up and visible, so as not to be confused with the assailant.
- Communicate the emergency to others if safe to do so.
- As soon as possible, call 911 to initiate a police response and relay as much information as possible including location of hostages, description of, type and description of weapons, description of the assailants, and any comments/demands made by the assailant
- Dial 7777 to inform IC, giving as much information as possible

IF UNABLE TO EVACUATE, **HIDE**

- Proceed to the nearest room (preferably one that locks), bringing any other staff, clients, patients, with you, and barricading the room with heavy furniture
- Close windows and blinds, turn off lights and remain quiet
- Silence electronics, and call 911 as soon as possible
- Dial 7777 to inform IC, giving as much information as possible

CALL CODE PURPLE as soon as possible

- Dial 7777 to initiate Code Purple, giving as much information as possible

HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN OTHER LOCATIONS WITHIN THE HOSPITAL

UPON HEARING A CODE PURPLE ANNOUNCEMENT

- Do not return to your department or go to the area of the incident. Stay safe and assist others in the area with hiding.
- Divide into small mixed groups of staff, patients, and visitors. Hide in patient rooms, meeting rooms, bathrooms, offices, etc. Remain quiet and turn off phones, alarms, electronic devices. Move away from windows and doors. Lay on the floor and hide under/behind large furniture.
- Follow the instructions of the Incident Command/Manager in your current location

- Minimize movement within the area to essential only.
- Do not use the telephone unless it is related to the incident.

Managers: If safe to do, perform a headcount to determine if all team members are accounted for.

Police must approve all movement throughout the hospital, until the Code Purple has been cleared.

This includes responding to other codes and patient care needs.

UPON THE ARRIVAL OF POLICE

Police Officers may:

- Be wearing normal uniforms or tactical gear, helmets, etc.
- Be armed with rifles, shotguns and/or handguns
- Use chemical irritants or incapacitating devices (e.g., pepper spray, stun grenades, tasers, etc.) to control the situation
- Shout commands and may push individuals to the ground for their safety

Police will be responding with the intent to use the required level of force to diffuse the situation. Ensure you do not present yourself as a threat to them.

- Drop any items in your hands (e.g., bags, jackets, etc.), raise your hands and keep them visible
- Remain calm. avoid screaming and/or yelling.
- Avoid making quick movements toward Officers; do not stop an Officer to ask questions. Proceed in the direction from which Officers are entering the area
- Do not interfere or impede their movements

Police are the primary responders for Code Purple and will assume control upon arrival. The first priority is minimizing damage by disarming the assailant; the first officers at the scene will not stop to assist injured individuals.

Rescue teams comprised of additional Officers and emergency medical personnel may follow the initial Officers when it is safe to do so. These rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons. They may also call upon able-bodied individuals to assist in removing the wounded from the area.

Once you have reached a safe location you will be held in that area by Police until the situation is under control and all witnesses have been identified and questioned. Do not leave the safe location until Police have instructed you to do so.

CHARGE NURSE/INCIDENT COMMANDER (Refer to Appendix A Incident Commander Code Purple Log)

The Incident Commander is to remain in the Command Centre for the duration of the Code Purple unless it is unsafe to do so or at instructions of Police.

If more than one person is available, work to complete these tasks in tandem.

- Upon notification Code Purple, dial 911 to initiate police response ensuring as much information as possible is relayed including specific details such as location and room number of incident, name and number of hostage takers, physical description, names and number of hostages, weapons, comments made etc.
- Dial **9(pause) 00 to announce to entire campus
Your Attention Please, Your Attention Please: "Code Purple_____ (specific location). Lock down and seek safety." x3
- Assess the situation to ensure the safety of residents/staff/visitors in your area and the need to evacuate
- If necessary, barricade yourself and others, if possible, in a room with a lock

- Remain on the phone with OPP dispatch to provide updates and accept instructions.
- Notify the CEO or Senior Manager as soon as safe to do so. The CEO or delegate will provide instructions regarding communication internally and externally, as well as directions to initiate ED Bypass or Closure.
- Upon Police arrival:
 - Provide any updates including location of assailant(s), victims, or people hiding
 - Provide master Salto (fob) if safe to do to
 - Follow police directions regarding announcements, communication, securing areas, moving patients/visitors etc.
 - Confirm attendance of persons from affected area, to determine if anyone is unaccounted for
 - Take notes and document activities, as much as possible

RECOVERY PLAN

Police will advise IC (or designate) when it is safe to end the Code Purple. At this time, the Incident Commander or Delegate will announce

“Your attention please, your attention please, *“Code Purple, All Clear”* x3.

- HCWs from the affected area should go to a designated meeting point that will be announced overhead when determined by Police, Incident Command and Senior Leadership
- Anyone injured during the incident will be assessed and treated once safe to do so.
- A plan will be created to support all staff involved. This will include an immediate debrief, as well as individual and group counselling, and EAP. Workers should speak with their supervisor regarding any specific concerns, needs, or considerations.
- Some departments may not be able to resume immediately if the affected area is secured for investigation, or if damage to facilities and equipment inhibits their use. An action plan will be generated to support patient services and return to normal functioning.
- A secondary debrief meeting will be held to evaluate current processes and identify process improvement opportunities.
- If a coordinated emergency response by several agencies is required, please consult the Town of Espanola Emergency Response Plan

EDUCATION

All employees complete the online Code Purple policy review in Surge Learning upon orientation and annually. It is the responsibility of the department manager to ensure their staff review the document following any revision. Staff are required to participate in any mock drills or training opportunities.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

1. Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, RSO 1990, c E.9. Available from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e09>
2. ERHHC. (2022). *Code Black- Bomb Threat/Suspicious Object*
3. ERHHC. (2022). *Code Silver-Threatening Weapon*
4. ERHHC. (2022). *Code White- Violent Person*
5. ERHHC. (2021). *ED Bypass Policy and Procedure*.
6. Haliburton Highlands Health Services. (2022). *Code Purple-Hostage Taking*
7. Health Protection and Promotion Act, RSO 1990, c. H.7. Ontario.ca. Available from: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h07>
8. North Shore Health Network. (2021). *Code Purple-Hostage Taking*
9. Ontario Hospital Association. (2008). *Emergency Management Toolkit*.



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10. Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1. Ontario.ca. (2022, April 11). Retrieved June 14, 2022, from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>
11. SJCG. (2023). Code Purple- Hostage Taking

Appendix A

Code PURPLE - Incident Commander (IC) Task Sheet (CEO or designate)

The ED RN will assume the role of IC until relieved by the CEO/delegate, or police.
If more than one person is available, work to complete the following tasks in tandem.

	ACTION
1	Code Purple is reported to Nurse/Ward Clerk at Incident Command Centre (Red phone ext. 7777).
2	Establish the Emergency Command Centre at the ED Nurse Station if safe to do so.
3.	Dial **9 (pause) 00 to announce to the entire health campus. "Your Attention Please, Your Attention Please, [Code PURPLE_____ (location)]x3" If ED is compromised, dial switchboard (0) to make the announcement.
3	Call 911 and notify the police, providing the following information: • Location of incident • Description of assailant(s) • Type & description of weapon(s) • Information on hostages / victims (if any) • Any comments or demands made by the assailant Remain on the phone with OPP dispatch to provide updates and accept instructions.
4	Notify the CEO/Senior Manager as soon as possible. The CEO will provide instructions re: internal/external communication.
5	Work to ensure the safety of others in the area by assisting in evacuation or hiding.
6	Initiate ED Bypass or Closure process.
7	Upon Police arrival: • Provide any updates including location of the assailant, victims, or people hiding • Provide master Salto (fob) if safe to do to • Follow police directions regarding announcements, communication, securing areas, moving patients/visitors etc. • Confirm attendance of persons from affected area, to determine if anyone is unaccounted for • Take notes and document activities, as much as possible
8	When advised by police announce, "Code Purple, All Clear" overhead three times.
9	Coordinate debriefing for all staff involved and establish plans to return to normal functioning. Ensure Critical Stress Debriefing is set up with EAP provider.
10	Ensure all documentation is complete and submitted with the Code Action Report in Surge Learning.

Name

Date