

Policy and Procedure

Department: Emergency Preparedness	Section: CODES	Subject: Code Yellow/Amber - Missing Person
Policy:	Original Date: 2021-03-16	Supersedes: 2021-03-16
Last Reviewed: 2026-06-22	Next Review Date: 2027-06-22	Approver: Angie Brunetti (Emergency Preparedness Committee)

POLICY STATEMENT

Code Yellow is the term used to activate a response process when a patient/resident is reported missing. Code Amber is used to activate a response process when an infant/child (less than 16 years of age) is reported missing. The Code Yellow/Amber policy is a risk management strategy used to ensure Espanola Regional Hospital and Health Centre (ERHHC) employees are able to react appropriately in the case of a missing person, 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).

AUTHORITY TO DECLARE

Any staff member who becomes aware that an infant/child/patient/resident from the ERHHC campus is missing must advise the Emergency Department (ED) nurse at Incident Command (IC) ext. 7777.

DEFINITIONS

ERHHC Campus: Includes the hospital, Espanola Nursing Home, Espanola & Area Family Health Team, Queensway Place Assisted Living, Non-Profit Housing (Seniors Apartments), Maintenance garage.

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).

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

If the person is **SEEN** leaving the facility during business hours, there is no need to conduct an internal search.

IC will page overhead by dialing **9 – 00 for entire campus notification:

“Your attention please, your attention please- Code Yellow (Location). No internal search required.”

IC will then:

- Notify OPP and provide as much detail as possible.
- Notify Department Manager, or Manager on Call.

Staff are not responsible for following a patient off hospital property.

For a Code Amber assume the infant/child has been abducted until proven otherwise. Call 911 to notify the OPP immediately

FAMILY HEALTH TEAM/ESPANOLA CLINIC

Any person who becomes aware that an infant/child/adult is missing from the Family Health Team must **first call 911** to notify the OPP. Next, call ext. **7777** to notify IC (ED nurse or ward clerk) to make the overhead announcement.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees

- Review the emergency plan annually and when changes are made, ensuring understanding of the roles and processes.
- Know the location of clients/residents in the area
- Checking for exiting patients/residents when the alarm is activated
- Participate in mock exercises and debriefs as required
- Ensure the appropriate Surge report is submitted

Managers

- Ensure all employees review and can respond competently in an emergency situation
- Ensure employees attend scheduled education programs or training opportunities
- Participate in mock exercises and debriefs as required

Emergency Preparedness Lead/Committee

- Review and update the policy annually
- Organizing and participating in mock drills and providing feedback
- Reviewing all Code Response reports for improvement opportunities

LOCAL RESPONSE (Acute or Long-Term Care) Refer to Appendix A

- Verify that the person has not signed out or is at a scheduled appointment
- Conduct an informal search of the immediate area.
- In LTC, call opposite wing to conduct a search
- Secure the area by closing and/or locking the doors of any rooms that have been checked.

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Once it has been determined that the person is missing, dial ext. 7777 to notify IC and provide a description.

For missing infant/child, IC will call 911 to notify police with a description and address(es) of family/guardian.

DAYTIME HOURS 0800-1600

IC will page overhead by dialing **9 – 00 for entire campus notification:

"Your Attention Please, Your Attention Please: Code Yellow/Amber _____ (department of missing person). Person is... (Physical description of missing person including sex, age, weight, height, hair

color, facial hair, glasses, distinguishing marks, clothing if known) **X2. DO NOT ANNOUNCE THE PERSONS NAME.**

Then announce: **"Please commence departmental searches. Once complete, report to Incident Command in Emergency Department"**

AFTER HOURS 1600-0800

IC will page overhead by dialing **9 – 00 for entire campus notification:

"Your Attention Please, Your Attention Please: Code Yellow/Amber _____ (department of missing person). Person is... (Physical description of missing person including sex, age, weight, height, hair color, facial hair, glasses, distinguishing marks, clothing if known) **X2. DO NOT ANNOUNCE THE PERSON'S NAME.**

Then announce: **"All search party staff please report to Incident Command in the Emergency Department."**

RESPONSE PROCEDURE

DAYTIME HOURS MONDAY-FRIDAY, 0800-1600

- IC will obtain the Code Yellow IC Daytime Hours Checklist (**Appendix B**) and announce via overhead paging system.
- The Code Yellow/Amber will continue to be announced every 30 minutes and then hourly until 9pm on the day of the code until the individual is located.
- Two staff members from each department will obtain their department's Code Yellow Binder and proceed to search the department using the map. Searching will occur in pairs to ensure staff safety. Once the search is complete, the map will be brought to Incident Command in the Emergency Department. Maintenance staff are designated to search the exterior areas as part of their departmental search map.
- IC will call OPP to report the missing person and give as much detail as possible, including:
 - Name of Missing Person
 - Time person was last seen
 - Physical description
 - Home Address and Address of Next of Kin
- The Department Manager will be notified by IC that a Code Yellow/Amber has been called. The Department Manager will notify the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Nursing Officer and keep them informed of the search outcome.
- Further directions will be taken from the police.

AFTER-HOURS, WEEKENDS OR HOLIDAYS, 1600-0800

- IC will obtain the Code Yellow IC Afterhours Checklist (**Appendix C**) and announce via the overhead paging system.

- Departments that are staffed 24/7 will complete a departmental search prior to reporting to IC (e.g., LTC North and South, ED, Acute, and Queensway Place until 10:00pm).
Designated search party members:
 - 1 Acute Care RN
 - 1 RPN North Wing
 - 1 PSW South Wing
 - 1 EVS (AB, FL or AA)
 - HCA
- IC will call the OPP to report the missing person. Provide the following details as available.
 - Name of Missing Person
 - Time person was last seen
 - Physical description
 - Home Address and Address(es) of Next of Kin
 - Photo if available
- Once the search party presents to IC, the ED Nurse will coordinate the remainder of the internal search. The search party will go in two teams of two, using the search packages/maps. The area from which the patient went missing does not need to be searched again.
- Further directions will be taken from the police.

WHEN THE MISSING PERSON IS LOCATED:

IC will page overhead by dialing **9 – 00 for entire campus notification:

"Your attention please, Code Yellow/Amber All Clear, Code Yellow/Amber All Clear".

- All parties will be notified as required, including police, CEO, CNO, physician, family.
- Maintenance will be contacted via the **On-Call phone 705 869-8691** to communicate that the person has been found, and they no longer need to search outdoors.
- The infant/child/patient/resident will be assessed in the emergency department, or on their unit, depending on the circumstances of the incident.
- **LTC:** The most responsible person will complete a Critical Incident Report in Surge Learning, as well as a Code Response Report. Note* The most responsible person will vary depending on the location from which the person went missing and the time of day.
A report must also be submitted to the Ministry of Long-Term Care immediately. Refer to Surge policy Reporting of Critical Incidents and Disclosure of Adverse Events.
- **Acute/ED:** The most responsible person will complete a Code Response Report in Surge Learning as well as a Patient Incident Report if, upon assessment, the patient is deemed to be injured or in distress.
- IC will complete the Code Yellow/Amber Incident Command checklist and Search Map Checklist and collect all completed search maps for submission to the Emergency Preparedness Lead.
- IC and other involved parties will participate in a debrief meeting led by the Emergency Preparedness Lead within 1 day of the incident.

EDUCATION

Staff will complete the online Code Yellow policy review in Surge learning annually as assigned. Mock Code Yellow drills will occur annually throughout the ERHHC Campus, to allow staff to understand and

practice a response to any code situation to effectively respond to a real event. As mandated by the *Fixing Long Term Care Act (FLTCA)*, a Code Yellow drill must be held annually.

RECOVERY PROCEDURES

Normal operations will resume as soon as possible. A debrief session/root cause analysis involving all necessary staff will take place as soon as possible in order to create an action plan to evaluate current processes and identify improvement opportunities. Stress debriefing will occur as needed and may include Social Work or Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

SURGE REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

ERHHC. (2026). Departmental Search Maps (Linked policy)
ERHHC. (2025). Incident Management System and Emergency Operations Centre
ERHHC. (2022). 7309 Incidents-Residents.
ERHHC. (2019). Reporting of Critical Incidents and Disclosure of Adverse Events.
ERHHC. (2025). Reporting to the Director (Ministry)

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Emergency management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.O. Ontario.ca. (2022, April 21). Retrieved June 14, 2022, from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e09>

Fixing Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2021 and Ontario Regulations 246/22

Ontario Hospital Association (2008). OHA Emergency Management Toolkit.

St. Joseph's General Hospital. (2023). Code Amber policy.

Appendix A:

Long-term Care Staff/Acute Care/Emergency Department CODE YELLOW ACTION CHECKLIST

Staff Name:

Time/Date:

Time		Duties
	1	Infant/Child/Adult/Resident is reported missing. Infant/Child = Code Amber. Adult/Resident = Code Yellow
	2	Check to determine if the person has signed out.
	3	Perform a quick search of the immediate area to verify the person is missing. In LTC, call the opposite wing to conduct a quick search.
	4	Notify IC at ext. 7777 and provide a description of the missing resident/patient: • Name • Height • Weight • Age • Build (athletic, slim) • Hair colour, length and style • Facial hair • Eye colour, glasses • Distinguishing marks • Clothing: shirt, pants, outerwear, head attire, • Mobility device
	5	Conduct a thorough search of unit/both wings, courtyards and garden using search maps in the Code Yellow binder. Bring the completed search map to IC.
	6	If After-hours, weekends, or holidays 1 Acute Care RN, 1 RPN North Wing, 1 HCA South wing is to report to IC to form a search party.
	7	Call (or delegate) the patient/resident POA/family to inform them of the missing person.
	8	Missing LTC resident: delegate a staff member to obtain the chart and photo of the resident from the code yellow binder (make ten copies) and bring them to Incident Command. These may be used for by the search parties or OPP.
	8	Upon return, assess the patient/resident for injury or distress, provide reassurance, and communicate return to all necessary parties (if not already done).
	9	LTC: The most responsible person will complete a Critical Incident Report in Surge Learning, as well as a Code Response Report . Note* The most responsible person will vary depending on the location from which the person went missing and the time of day. A report must also be submitted to the Ministry of Long-Term Care immediately. Refer to Surge policy Reporting of Critical Incidents and Disclosure of Adverse Events.
	10	Acute/ED: The most responsible person will complete a Code Response Report in Surge Learning as well as a Critical Incident Report if, upon assessment, the patient is deemed to be injured or in distress.

Appendix B: Incident Command Checklist (Daytime hours)

Incident Commander – ED Ward Clerk (until 11pm)/ED Nurse

Hours: 0800-1600

Staff Name:

Time/Date:

Time	Duties
1	Infant/Child/Adult/Resident is reported missing. Infant/Child = Code Amber Adult/Resident = Code Yellow
2	Page overhead by dialing **9 – 00 for entire campus notification: "Your Attention Please, Your Attention Please: Code Yellow/Amber ____ (department of missing person). Person is... (Physical description of missing person including sex, age, weight, height, hair color, facial hair, glasses, distinguishing marks, clothing if known) X2. DO NOT ANNOUNCE THE PERSON'S NAME. Then announce: Please commence departmental searches. Once complete, report to Incident Command in Emergency Department. If the person is seen leaving the facility, announce "Attention please, Attention please, Code Yellow- no internal search required"
3	Announce "Code Yellow/Amber remains in effect" every 30 minutes twice and then hourly until 2100 on the day of the code until the individual is located.
4	Obtain Emergency Department "Code Yellow" binder and delegate two staff to search ED using the search map.
5	Call 911 to report the missing person and provide as much detail/information as possible. If an infant/child is missing provide OPP with a description and address of family/guardian.
6	If the missing person is a resident delegate LTC staff, will provide resident photo and chart.
7	Notify Department Manager of Code Yellow/Amber
8	Once departmental searches are complete the search maps will be brought to IC. Track complete maps on the Search Map Checklist (Appendix E)
9	Once OPP arrives, command is turned over and further directions will be taken from the police.
10	When the missing person is located, announce "Code Yellow/Amber All Clear" X2.
11	Notify maintenance by calling the Maintenance On-Call phone. 705 869-8691 (communication re: terminating external search)
12	Ensure the infant/child/adult/resident is assessed by medical staff or will be assessed by LTC staff (when appropriate). Call appropriate LTC staff to retrieve their resident.
13	Ensure appropriate reports are submitted in Surge Learning (Code Response Report +/- Critical Incident Report.
14	Submit Incident Commander checklist, completed departmental search maps and the Search Map Checklist to Manager/Emergency Preparedness Lead.

Appendix C: Incident Command Checklist (Afterhours)

Incident Commander – ED Ward Clerk (until 11pm)/ED Nurse

After-hours, Weekends, or Holidays, 1600-0800

Staff name:

Time/Date:

Time		Duties
	1	Infant/Child/Adult/Resident is reported missing. Infant/Child = Code Amber Adult/Resident = Code Yellow
	2	Page overhead by dialing **9 – 00 for entire campus notification: "Your Attention Please, Your Attention Please: Code Yellow/Amber ____ (department of missing person). Person is... (Physical description of missing person including sex, age, weight, height, hair color, facial hair, glasses, distinguishing marks, clothing if known) X2 . DO NOT ANNOUNCE THE PERSON'S NAME. Then announce: Search Party Staff Report to Emergency Department . (1 Acute Care RN, 1 RPN North, 1 PSW South, 1 EVS (AB, ED, or L, HCA) If patient is seen leaving the facility, announce "Attention please, Attention please, Code Yellow- no internal search required"
		Announce " Code Yellow/Amber remains in effect " every 30 minutes twice and then hourly until 2100 on the day of the code until the individual is located.
		Obtain Emergency Department "Code Yellow" binder and delegate two staff to search ED using the search map.
	3	Call 911 to report the missing person and give as much detail/information as possible. If an infant/child is missing provide OPP with a description and address of family/guardian.
	4	If the missing person is a resident delegate LTC staff, will provide resident photo and chart.
	6	Establish search parties (Appendix D) and hand out search maps.
	7	Notify Manager On-Call of Code Yellow/Amber via on-call phone.
	8	Once departmental searches are complete the search maps will be brought to IC. Track complete maps on the Search Map Checklist (Appendix E)
	9	Once the police arrive, command is turned over, and further direction is taken from the police.
	10	When missing person is located, announce " Code Yellow/Amber All Clear " X2.
	11	Ensure the infant/child/adult/resident is assessed by medical staff or will be assessed by LTC staff (when appropriate). Call appropriate LTC staff to retrieve their resident.
	12	Ensure appropriate reports are submitted in Surge Learning (Code Response Report +/- Critical Incident Report).
	13	Submit Incident Commander checklist, completed departmental search maps and the Search Map Checklist to Manager/Emergency Preparedness Lead.

Appendix D: CODE YELLOW Afterhours Search Process

After-hours, Weekends or Holidays, 1600-0800 Search Team 1

Staff Name:

Time:

Date:

If staff do not have SALTO access to a room or area, please indicate on the map.
The master key is in the ED and can be used to access these areas if necessary.

Search Areas indicated by the following maps:

- NPH Apartments + QWP Lobby
- QWP (after 2200)
- EVS/CSR
- Kitchen/Cafeteria
- Link to FHT

If at any time the individual is found, communicate with IC at ext. 3000.

After-hours, Weekends or Holidays, 1600-0800 Search Team 2

Staff Name:

Time:

Date:

If staff do not have SALTO access to a room or area, please indicate on the map.
The master key is in the ED and can be used to access these areas if necessary.

Search Areas indicated by the following maps:

- DI
- Lab
- Health Records, Admin
- Physiotherapy
- HR, IT, Boardroom, Main Entrance

If at any time the individual is found, communicate with IC at ext. 3000.

Appendix E: Search Map Checklist

Search Location	Search Map Returned
Acute Care	
Admin, Health Records	
DI	
ED/Pharmacy	
Stores, Receiving, Waste area	
FHT	
HR, Boardroom, Main Entrance	
Kitchen/Cafeteria	
Lab	
LTC North	
LTC South	
Maintenance/External	
Physiotherapy	
Queensway Place	
QWP Lobby, NPH Apartments	
Sleep Clinic	

Please return the completed Search Map Checklist with completed search maps to Manager/Emergency Preparedness Lead.