Department-Level Planning and Preparedness:

A Toolkit to Assist in Full-Facility Hospital Evacuations

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A full-facility hospital evacuation is often the last resort utilized when facing an emergency situation as it is highly complex and disruptive to patient care. Therefore, the decision is made after significant consideration and exhaustion of all other options. Current literature indicates two key considerations in hospital preparedness for full-facility evacuations. The first consideration is that many of the successes from past hospital evacuations relied on informal relationships that leaders had with other organizations, in addition to hospital staff assuming informal leadership roles during evacuations. The second indicates a significant need for appropriate communication within the organization and between relevant partners during emergencies.

Building on these findings, we created a toolkit that aims to assist unit leaders in developing department-level plans that work cohesively with current hospital evacuation policies to prepare and respond to full-facility evacuations. The toolkit is tailored to clinical units of an acute tertiary care hospital and focuses on ensuring plans are easily instructive, fillable, and adaptable. In addition, the evacuation toolkit will assist clinical units in developing an evacuation plan, increasing preparedness, and increasing communication in the process.

Relevant stakeholders within healthcare are often underprepared for the implications of preparing for and implementing an evacuation. Individually, the toolkit will ensure that preparing for an emergency necessitating a full-facility hospital evacuation is possible while the needs of each department are addressed. Creating a versatile resource for an acute tertiary care hospital can lead to advances in emergency management as it will provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches at a departmental and organizational level. In the growing field of emergency management, evidence-based research and implementation are necessary to address informal networks and communication concerns.

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