

Policies, Procedures, Standard Operating Practices

Title: Code Brown – Unknown / Unmanageable Hazardous Substance or Spill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Procedure <input type="checkbox"/> SOP
Category: General Sub-category: Emergency Plan	Distribution: Organization Wide
Endorsed: President & CEO Signature:	Approval Date: Apr 1, 2005 Reviewed/Revised Date: Oct. 5, 2021 Next Review Date: Oct. 5, 2024

CROSS REFERENCES: Code Brown Sub-plan and Checklist – All Areas; Code Green- Evacuation Plan (EMER-90), Code Grey – Air Exclusion (EMER-10), Code Grey – Critical Infrastructure (EMER-10 B), Chemical Spills (OHS-os-218), Radiation Safety – Spills Procedure (DI-SAF-15), Senior Leader on-call policy (ADMIN-33), Incident Management System (EMER-160; Hazardous Drugs Spills – Clean Up (SAF-2-10), Routine Practices and Additional Precautions (IPC-1-18)

1. PURPOSE

Outline the actions to be taken when a potentially unknown and/or unmanageable substance is found within Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (the Hospital) or on Hospital grounds.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Hospital occupants and property must be protected from exposure to hazardous or potentially hazardous substances or spills. The Hospital provides an immediate and safe means of identification, communication, response and clean-up of hazardous spills. Any substance having the potential to cause physical harm, regardless of origin, must be considered dangerous.

3. SCOPE

A Code Brown response applies to incidents when a potential or definite hazardous substance within the Hospital or on Hospital property cannot be appropriately identified, managed, contained, cleaned or disposed of by the affected department or external contractor due to volume, toxicity, reactivity, or any combination thereof.

For confirmed radioactive spills, refer Radiation Safety–Spills Procedure (DI-SAF-15). For suspected hazardous drugs spills, refer to Hazardous Drugs Spills – Clean Up (Saf-2-10).

The Code Brown policy does not apply to the Medical or Professional buildings. For hazardous spills in non-Hospital buildings, evacuate the immediate area and contact 9-911.

4. DEFINITIONS

Code Brown Response Team refers to a team of personnel who have assigned response duties during a Code Brown.

Incident Manager is in charge of managing the Hospital's overall response to the Code Brown incident.

Manageable Substance is a known substance that can be managed by the affected department or unit staff or external contractor, as per OHS-os-218 Chemical Spills, and the department's standard clean up procedures. Housekeeping could be requested to assist with the clean-up, if available. A Code Brown would not be called.

Unknown Substance is a material that is in gas, liquid or solid form which cannot be positively identified by the person discovering the substance, posing an immediate hazard.

5. PROCEDURE

For a response overview, see [Appendix 1: Code Brown Response Algorithm](#)

If spill/substance is unknown and/or unmanageable and may pose a hazard to staff/hospital property:

5.1 DISCOVERY:

Staff in the immediate area:

- Immediately remove people from the area and close doors;
- Activate Code Brown response by calling Switchboard at “55”, providing the location (department + room number);
- Check all washrooms, offices, storage rooms within the area;
- Secure area so that no one enters;
- Control sources of ignition (if safe to do so);
- Report the incident to immediate supervisor;
- If substance is known, consult Material Safety Data Sheets / Safety Data Sheets from department’s MSDS book or [iNtranet](#) and follow safety precautions;
- Wait for the Code Brown Team outside of the area.

Staff NOT in the immediate area:

- Return to own unit, if safe to do so;
- Remain off all elevators for five minutes following initial overhead announcement;
- Do not travel to or through the area where the Code Brown is located;
- Should the Code Brown increase to evacuation, refer to department Code Green-EMER 90 sub-plans.

5.2 ANNOUNCEMENT AND NOTIFICATION:

Switchboard to:

- Announce overhead, “**Code Brown + location. Please stay off the elevators for the next 5 minutes**” three times, initiating the Code Brown response procedure;
- Repeat “**Code Brown + location**” as per Switchboard instructions.
- Contact the Senior Leader on call during regular business hours (0800h-1600h Mon-Fri) or Administrative Coordinator after-hours (weekends & holidays; 1600h-0800h Mon-Fri).
- Call Nuclear Medicine Technologist if spill is suspected to be radioactive.
- Once all required members of the response team have arrived and the substance is contained, announce “Code Brown, All Clear” overhead three times as directed by Incident Manager / designate; and

5.3 MANAGEMENT OF CODE BROWN

Code Brown Response Team

The membership of the Code Brown Response Team may vary depending on staffing levels of the facility at the time of the emergency. Notwithstanding, if possible, the team consists of:

- (1) Intervention Security Officer;
- (1) Housekeeping Supervisor or Lead Hand;
- (1) Building Systems Operator;
- (1) Nuclear Medicine Technologist (on site: 7am – 5pm Monday – Friday; after-hours: available via Switchboard as required);
- (1) Senior Leader on call;
- (1) Administrative Coordinator (after normal business hours);
- (1) Director/Manager/Supervisor of incident site (if available);
- (1) Incident Manager (as assigned by Senior Leader / Administrative Coordinator on call);

Code Team Response Procedure

For specific responsibilities of each responder see [Roles and Responsibilities Section 6](#).

- Upon hearing “Code Brown” overhead, the Code Brown Response Team responds to the incident site to assist with containment and secure the area;

- Senior Leader on call assumes or delegates the role of Incident Manager to the most appropriate management staff (i.e., VP, Director, Manager, or Supervisor).
 - i. The individual fulfilling the Incident Manager role may change as the event unfolds, escalates and as more senior/experienced staff members become available. After regular hours, the Admin. Coordinator serves as the interim Incident Manager until a more appropriate person becomes available.
 - ii. The Incident Manager coordinates the Hospital's overall response to a Code Brown; and reports to the incident site and dons the department's emergency response vest, as available.
- If the incident site involves interacting with a patient who requires additional precautions, or there is a risk of coming into contact with bodily fluids, the Code Brown Response Team must follow Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) guidelines. Refer to IPC-1-18 Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for details, including:
 - i. Risk assessment for transmission of a contagious disease;
 - ii. How to select and don/doff appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
 - iii. Proper hand hygiene measures;
 - iv. Further, when applicable, the Code Brown Response Team must follow Occupational Health and Safety Department (OHS) guidelines for use of other appropriate PPE as determine through regulations, policy, or through a risk assessment.
- Upon assessment, the Code Brown Response Team on site instructs Switchboard to modify the announcement, instructing staff to avoid areas within the incident site (i.e. stairwells, elevators);
- If substance cannot be identified, cannot be managed by the Code Brown Response Team, or is located in a restricted area, Code Brown Response Team:
 - i. Secures the area;
 - ii. Only permits authorized personnel with appropriate PPE to access the incident site;
 - iii. Pages the appropriate expert through Switchboard.
- The Hospital follows strict regulations to ensure all radioactive substances are clearly labeled and safely managed. Notwithstanding, if a suspected or known radioactive spill occurs:
 - a) When Nuclear Medicine is open (7 am – 5 pm, Mon – Fri):
 - i. Responders secure the area so that no one enters and establish a perimeter of 6 meters in open areas.
 - ii. Nuclear Medicine Technologist (NMT) on scene responds and determines if the spill is radioactive. If the spill is radioactive, the NMT implements the Radiation Safety–Spills Procedure (DI-SAF-15) and immediately calls switchboard at “55” to page the Radiation Safety Officer (Diagnostic Imaging) or designate for guidance.
 - b) When Nuclear Medicine is closed (5 pm – 7 am, Mon – Fri, weekends and holidays):
 - i. The Code Brown Response Team secures the area and establishes a perimeter of 6 meters in open areas;
 - ii. Team instructs Switchboard to call the Radiation Safety Officer Diagnostic Imaging (DI) or designate, as per RSO after-hours contact list. The area remains secure until the RSO or designate arrives on scene and makes a determination.
- If external assistance is required, the Incident Manager or designate instructs Switchboard to call the Thunder Bay Fire Rescue for a HAZMAT response. Radiation Security Officer meets and guides the Fire Department to the location. Additional agencies to be contacted as required (e.g., Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Labour).
- As per the Environmental Protection Act, if the spill is a pollutant (e.g. oil, chemicals) the Incident Manager designates a member of the Code Brown Response Team to report spills of pollutants (e.g. oil, chemicals) to the Ministry of Environment Spills Action Centre by calling 1-800-268-6060 (toll-free), or 1-855-889-5775.

5.4 DEACTIVATION & RECOVERY

Incident manager or designate:

- Once the substance is contained, the Incident Manager or designate instructs Switchboard to announce “Code Brown, All Clear” overhead three times, deactivating the response;
- Ensures all occupants receive medical treatment as required;
- Ensures proper documentation is completed and submitted as per Section 7. Documentation;
- Ensures relevant information communicated to internal stakeholders, staff and media;
- Organizes a debriefing session in consultation with Emergency Preparedness and OHS.

Responding Department(s):

- Ensure response resources (i.e., spill kits) are replenished and returned to appropriate location.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

IMMEDIATE AREA OF THE SPILL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immediately remove people from the area and close doors; ▪ Activate Code Brown response by calling Switchboard at “55”, providing the location (department + room number); ▪ Check all washrooms, offices, storage rooms within the area; ▪ Secure area so that no one enters; ▪ Control sources of ignition (if safe to do so); ▪ Report the incident to immediate supervisor; ▪ If substance is known, consult Material Safety Data Sheets / Safety Data Sheets from department’s MSDS book or iNtranet and follow safety precautions; ▪ Wait for the Code Brown Response Team outside of the area.
OUTSIDE THE AREA OF THE SPILL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Return to own unit, if safe to do so; ▪ Remain off all elevators for five minutes following initial overhead announcement; ▪ Do not travel to or through the area where the Code Brown is located; ▪ Should the Code Brown increase to evacuation, refer to department Code Green-EMER 90 sub-plans.
ADJACENT BUILDINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Code Brown policy does not apply to the Medical or Professional buildings. For hazardous spills in non-Hospital buildings, evacuate the immediate area and contact 9-911.
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (OHS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensures employees experiencing adverse health effects are removed from the area and obtain treatment; ▪ Ensures an Employee Incident Report is completed. It would be the employees that generate this, and OHS would assist but they would not complete the form.
SWITCHBOARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Announce overhead, “Code Brown + location. Please stay off the elevators for the next 5 minutes” three times, initiating the Code Brown response procedure; ▪ Repeat “Code Brown + location” as per Switchboard instructions; ▪ Contact the Senior Leader on call during regular business hours (0800h-1600h Mon-Fri) or Administrative Coordinator after-hours (weekends & holidays; 1600h-0800h Mon-Fri); ▪ Call Nuclear Medical Technologist if spill is suspected to be radioactive; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When Nuclear Medicine is closed (5 pm – 7 am, Mon – Fri, weekends and holidays): call the Radiation Safety Officer (DI) or designate, as per RSO after-hours contact list; ▪ Announce instructions overhead as directed by the Incident Manager or designate; ▪ Deactivation: Once all required members of the response team have arrived and the substance is contained, the Incident Manager or designate with direct Switchboard to announce “Code Brown, All Clear” overhead three times.
SENIOR LEADER ON CALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immediately notified of all Code Brown incidents via Switchboard (0800-1600 Monday- Friday); ▪ Briefed on the incident by most senior staff member at the incident site or Admin Coord via Switchboard; ▪ Assumes or delegates the role of Incident Manager; ▪ If not on site, arrives on site as required; ▪ If appropriate, informs the Hospital’s President & CEO of the incident;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If required, escalates the Hospital's response, and activate the Hospital's Incident Management Framework, Command Centre or other Emergency Colour Codes (i.e. Code Green, Code Grey).
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR (During after-hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediately notified via Switchboard for after-hours incidents Contacts the Senior Leader on call for direction, as required; Provides guidance and direction to impacted staff; Assumes the role of interim Incident Manager.
DIRECTOR/ MANAGER/ SUPERVISOR OF INCIDENT SITE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directs staff to call switchboard at "55" and declare a Code Brown (if not already done so); Establishes contact with Senior Leader on call or Administrative Coordinator; If designated, assumes role of Incident Manager and directs the overall response.
INCIDENT MANAGER (Senior Leader on call, Admin. Coordinator [after hours] or designate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinates the Hospitals overall response to a Code Brown; Reports to the incident site and dons the department's emergency response vest for easy identification, as available; Instructs switchboard to announce overhead locations to avoid (i.e., stairwells and elevators, rooms); If external assistance is required, contacts Thunder Bay Fire Service for a HAZMAT response via Switchboard; If required, activates the Hospital's Command Centre and assigns additional personnel to the Incident Management Team to the extent necessary to manage the situation; If required, activates other Emergency Colour Codes (i.e., Code Green, Code Grey) in consultation with Senior Leader. <p>Deactivation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls Switchboard to deactivate Code Brown; Schedules & chairs post incident debrief with relevant staff; Ensures required documentation is complete.
SECURITY (Intervention Officer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security Officer (Intervention Officer) assists to secure and isolate the area of the substance threat; Meets and directs external agencies (i.e. Fire Department) to incident site; Assists with the overall response as necessary.
HOUSEKEEPING (Supervisor or Lead Hand)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists to secure and isolate the area of the substance threat; Assists with the overall response as necessary.
MAINTENANCE (Building System Operator)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building System Operator or designate assists to secure and isolate the area of the substance threat; Assists external agencies as necessary; Contacts Maintenance Supervisor on Call for additional support, if required.
NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports to the Code Brown incident to determine if substance is potentially or actually radioactive; If radioactivity is confirmed, calls Switchboard at "55" to page or call the Radiation Safety Officer or designate as per the RSO contact list.

7. DOCUMENTATION

Document	Details	Responsibility
Employee Incident Report (if any exposure or injury occurred to staff)	1. To be completed as soon as possible. 2. Copies to be submitted to , Quality Risk Management (QRM)	Relevant staff as appropriate, in consultation with Code Brown Response Team
Electronic Incident Learning (Patient Safety) Report (if any exposure or injury occurred)		

Code Brown Observation Form (mandatory)	1. Form located on iNtranet 2. To be submitted to Lead, Emergency Preparedness within 7 days of the incident	Incident Manager / designate
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8. EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Code Brown training to occur at a frequency that is determined by the Emergency Preparedness Committee in consultation with the Code Brown Working Group and relevant stakeholders.

9. REFERENCES:

Rouge Valley Health System, Code Brown – Hazardous Spill, EDC-0003, November 2013;
University Health Network, Code Brown Policy, 2012.

Appendix 1: Code Brown Response Algorithm

