

Michigan Hospital Protects Home Health Team with InformaCast Panic Buttons



The Challenge

Holland Hospital in western Michigan needed a way for its Home Health Services team to send alerts when they needed assistance. Codewords and phrases can be difficult to use, and dispatchers could benefit from more information about who needed assistance and where they were located.

The Solution

The healthcare organization implemented InformaCast, a mass notification and incident management system, that offers a mobile panic button available through an app. The home health team can access the app on their phones and request assistance should an incident arise, providing their name and location so help can arrive quickly.

Protecting the Home Health Team

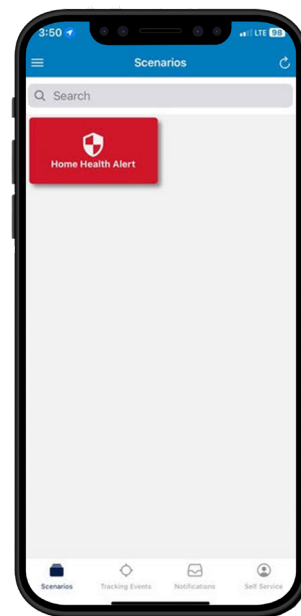
In western Michigan, Holland Hospital employs more than 2,250 staff members providing nationally-recognized top-quality care and an outstanding patient experience. This includes nearly 50 members assigned to the home health team who visit discharged patients at their homes for medical treatment and follow-up care. The team serves more than 200 patients and sometimes drives upwards of 50 miles to reach them. With so many members of their team traveling, Greg Chatfield, director of security and support services for Holland Hospital, is committed to finding the best way to ensure their safety should an incident arise during a patient visit.

“We continually seek ways to improve our current processes,” Chatfield said. “Previously, a team member would place a call into a dispatcher and then use a codeword or phrase to signal that they needed assistance. We would then send help to their last known location.”

While this process was effective, Chatfield was confident that it could be improved, and began looking for a new tool staff could use. His search led him to InformaCast, a mass notification and incident management software from Singlewire Software, which offered a mobile panic button via an app. Staff now have an easily accessible panic button they can use to request help should a hazardous situation arise. When the panic button is pressed, notifications are sent to several different locations.

This initiates a process to dispatch help, alert 911, and reach out to individuals to better understand what’s happening and what kind of assistance they need.

“The biggest advantage for our home care workers is that they know when they push that button, someone is coming to help,” Chatfield said.



Creating Safer Facilities

Safety wasn't just a concern for traveling workers though. Holland Hospital has one main facility and operates 31 other facilities with 44 individual clinical services across two counties. With so many facilities that needed to share critical information, Chatfield sought to improve the level of penetration that the organization was able to achieve using overhead paging and phone trees.

"We wanted to be certain everyone was getting the message quickly to understand what was happening and begin taking action," said Chatfield.

Like all hospitals, the organization used multiple systems to communicate, but this may impact response time and present a burden for the hospital staff in charge of sending out the communications. This changed when Holland Hospital began using InformaCast. Chatfield has been able to configure codes that send notifications for fires, abductions, active shooters, and other critical situations to 1900 devices, including Cisco IP phones and overhead speakers, as well as SMS text messages, Microsoft Teams, and email. The organization is able to reach more people more quickly so they can understand what's happening and begin taking action to mitigate the impact of a potential emergency.



Severe Weather Impacts Operations

Due to its location in the Midwest, an ongoing concern for Holland Hospital is the various severe weather events that can have a big impact on operations and patient care.

"We need to be prepared for severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, and even blizzards," said Chatfield. "Each of those situations requires different kinds of preparation and response."

For severe thunderstorms, building engineers need to prep generators in case a facility loses power. For tornadoes, staff needs to begin moving patients into hallways away from windows, pulling out supplies like flashlights, and being prepared to switch patient documentation from digital tools to manual record keeping if the need arises. In the case of a blizzard, administrators need to make arrangements for staff to stay on-site and continue delivering patient care if staff currently outside the buildings are not able to travel in. It also impacts food services who need to prepare meals.

InformaCast offers the ability to monitor severe weather feeds from the National Weather Service to send automated alerts for specified weather events. This is particularly helpful for Holland Hospital which serves multiple counties and facilities may be exposed to different weather conditions depending on their locations. When severe weather is detected, announcements are made via overhead speakers to staff within a facility so they know what to expect and can begin making the proper preparations.

"The quicker we can alert people that severe weather is approaching, the sooner they can begin to act," said Chatfield. "InformaCast enables us to stay ahead of these events so we can protect our staff and continue to provide a high level of care for our patients."

For more information about how InformaCast can help your healthcare organization protect staff and patients, visit www.singlewire.com/informacast-healthcare.