How to Prevent Corridor Clutter in Hospitals

Corridor clutter remains one of The Joint Commission’s (TJC) top cited standards. Almost 50% of hospitals receive an “Insufficient Compliance” rating related to hallway equipment not impeding means of egress – LS.02.01.20. The Life Safety code requires that, “all exit paths must remain free of obstructions, including unattended items that are not considered in use by staff members.” Practically speaking, any item that is unattended, not in use, or that blocks an egress would be considered clutter.

Keeping hospital hallways uncluttered is extremely critical in fire, tornado, and other emergency scenarios, as they may require that patients and staff be evacuated quickly where visibility is already reduced. Although hospital corridors are designed to provide ample room for urgent relocation (8 feet of clear width), this can create an increased difficulty – with medical equipment and other items in the way.

How can hospitals improve their compliance and avoid citations?

It’s crucial to instill in every hospital employee the responsibility of ensuring equipment is stored properly and not cluttering the hallways. This includes storing unused equipment either in an alcove or storage room and immediately removing equipment when it’s no longer in use.

Staff should also clearly understand which items are permitted to stay in the hallway. For example, crash carts are exempt from The Joint Commission’s 30-minute “parking” rule, as they need to be readily accessible at all times. To support LS.02.01.20 compliance, hospitals are also taking advantage of real-time locating systems (RTLS). The benefits are two-fold:

1. Minimizing the amount of equipment placed in a corridor for expected patient use.
2. Immediate removal of used equipment after patient care is delivered.

With real-time visibility into equipment status and location, hospital staff do not need to keep equipment in the hallway for expected use. They can see in real-time where equipment is on a map and retrieve it when needed. They can also request delivery of the equipment by creating a task within the RTLS system. And by using RTLS data, sterilization and biomedical engineering teams can automate PAR (periodic automatic replenishment) processes, so clean equipment never falls below predetermined levels by type of inpatient unit. In addition, setting PAR levels helps prevent too much of the equipment concentrating in specific areas.

RTLS systems also allow for the setting of rules to notify staff if a piece of equipment is close to violating the 30-minute parking rule. For example, at Infirmary Health in Mobile, AL, a notification is sent automatically to transporters when any type of bed has been in any hallway or passageway for 20 minutes. This allows staff to promptly dispatch a team member to pick up the bed and take it to a cleaning or storage area, therefore relieving staff of corridor clutter.

Learn more about how Infirmary Health is leveraging an RTLS system to stay in compliance with the LS.02.01.20 standard – IntelligentInsites.com/Videos/Infirmary