

Pembroke Regional Hospital

MEMO

To: All Staff
From: Sheldon Higginson, Manager, Occupational Health and Safety
Date: July 18, 2025
Subject: Emergency Department Safety & Security Update

Following a serious incident in the Emergency Department, we have launched a comprehensive Emergency Department Safety & Security Action Plan. This initiative is grounded in staff feedback and internal review, and reflects our ongoing commitment to a safe, supportive, and responsive environment for all patients, staff, and visitors.

This work will be carried out in close collaboration with both the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) and the Preventing Violence in the Workplace Committee, whose insights and participation are essential to the success of these initiatives.

To provide data-based context for these efforts, a chart summarizing Emergency Department incidents and near misses from recent years is included below. We've also provided a summary of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development visit.

Action Plan - Key Initiatives Underway

Topic	Description	Status
Security Role Review	Clarifying responsibilities and protocols for security personnel, including their role in emergency scenarios, Code White response, and the use of restraints. This will also be communicated to staff. If security is needed, please contact Clinical Resource, or x6800 during their working hours. For Code White, follow Code White policy, and initiate by calling x6666.	In progress.
Security Guard Scheduling	Following an evaluation of current coverage hours and benchmarking against other hospitals, the Hospital will plan for security to be scheduled on weekdays from 1600 to 0800 and 24/7 on weekends and statutory holidays.	To be implemented upon successful recruitment of security guards by the security company.

	Until then, the current hours for security are 1630 – 0030.	
Panic Alarm System Audit	<p>Ensuring alarm reliability and staff awareness. To note, Panic Alarms are self-monitoring, and any technology failures (e.g., low battery) will result in a notification to Occ Health and Safety.</p> <p>Education and training on usage, and on the “Personal Panic Alarms” Policy, and “Standard Work Process for Personal Panic Alarms”, available on Policy Medical. For any questions, please contact your manager.</p>	System testing is complete; further improvements and communication are underway.
Emergency Department Nurses Station Safety	Assessing the physical layout and identifying safety enhancements specific to the Emergency Department nurses station.	In progress.
Restraint Protocols	Updating restraint policies to reflect a shift toward a “7-point restraint or less” approach, with a focus on safety, dignity, and appropriate use.	Education and policy updates are planned for Fall 2025.
ED Building Access Control	<p>Strengthening access between the waiting room and clinical areas.</p> <p>The Working Group reviewed locking mechanisms and recommended using the same systems as AMH and SDC. As a result, The Security Company has been issued a PO, and the technology has been ordered, to ensure the appropriate locking of doors.</p>	Implementation expected in August 2025.
Violence Alerts	Enhancing after-hours alert entry into Anzer for Violence/Aggression Assessment Checklist (VAAC).	In progress.
Search of Patient Property	<p>Reviewing and updating search policy and procedures in collaboration with ED and security teams.</p> <p>Current policies “Search of Patient Property” and “Weapons”</p>	In progress.
Signage	Prevention of Violence Committee recommended violence prevention signage. This was approved and will be displayed organizationally on digital displays.	In progress.

Emergency Department Violence Events

Based on the data below, the Emergency Department has maintained a strong record of minimizing injuries, with the vast majority of reported incidents being near misses or hazardous situations that did not result in harm. This reflects a proactive reporting culture and a solid foundation of safety awareness among staff. Building on this strength, this action plan focuses on further reducing risks, enhancing preventative measures, and continuing to foster a safe and secure environment for everyone in the ED.

Year	Total	Incidents, resulting in injury.	Near Misses/Hazardous Situation
2023	38	4	34
2024	53	3	50
2025 to date	31	4	27

Visit from Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD)

On July 16, 2025, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) attended Pembroke Regional Hospital to respond to a complaint of workplace violence from patients to workers in the ED and AMH.

Specifically, as it relates to ED, the complaint outlined the lack of a secured nursing station, and the lack of clarity around the role of the third-party security in dealing with workplace violence.

The inspector from the MLITSD had a thorough discussion with members of the JHSC and other stakeholders, as well as reviewed various relevant documents, and did a site tour.

At the conclusion, the inspector issued the following orders to The Hospital:

- 1. The employer shall ensure that at least once a year, the measures and procedures for the health and safety of workers are revised in light of current practice. The code white policy does not reflect current practice of the use of third party security who are trained in use of force.*
- 2. The employer, in consultation with and in consideration of the recommendation of the joint health and safety committee, shall develop, establish and provide training programs in health and safety measures and procedures for workers that are relevant to the workers' work. Workers are not trained on the use and limitations of personal panic alarms.*

3. *The employer shall reassess the risk of workplace violence as often as is necessary to ensure that the violence policy and program continue to protect workers from workplace violence. A violence risk re-assessment is required of the emergency department due to many changes in the area.*

The Hospital received and acknowledged the orders, and is actively working to comply.

In closing, we sincerely thank all staff for your continued input, professionalism, and dedication. Your voices are essential as we work together to ensure a safer Emergency Department for everyone.