



Communicating Critical and/or Discrepant Results

Notification of the patient's healthcare provider when the radiologist determines that an imaging study has new and unexpected findings that could result in mortality or significant morbidity. These standards are consistent with recommendations and policies from the Mass. Coalition for the Prevention of Medical Errors, the Joint Commission, and the ACR.

Definition of Urgency Levels	Examples	Notification Time line... <i>from discovery of finding</i>	Mode of Communication	Documentation Requirements... <i>for all levels</i>
RED ALERT (LEVEL 1) ... Findings that are potentially immediately life-threatening.	EXAMPLES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tension pneumothorax • Ischemic bowel • Intracerebral hemorrhage 	≤ 60 MINUTES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate, interruptive communication • From the interpreting radiologist to either a responsible physician or other licensed caregiver who can initiate the appropriate clinical action for the patient. • Face to Face • Telephone Contact 	Documentation in the final radiology report , must contain the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of the communicator • Date and time of the communication. • Name of the recipient of the notification
ORANGE ALERT (LEVEL 2) ... Findings that could result in mortality or significant morbidity if not appropriately treated urgently.	EXAMPLES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intra-abdominal abscess • Impending pathological hip fracture 	≤ 3 HOURS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to Face • Telephone Contact 	Sample Statement: <i>"Critical findings were communicated by Dr. [radiologist] to Dr. [surgeon] at 3:15 PM on Monday, January 3, 2006"</i>
YELLOW ALERT (LEVEL 3) ... Findings that could result in mortality or significant morbidity if not appropriately treated, but are not immediately life-threatening or urgent.	EXAMPLES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lung nodule • Solid renal mass 	≤ 3 DAYS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to Face • Telephone Contact • Other Method that allows communication to <u>verify that notification is successful.</u> <i>(Per the JC 2nd BWH Policy, e-mail is not a verifiable method of communication)</i>	

The person communicating the critical/discrepant radiological findings should be certain that the member of the patient care team is **aware of the critical nature of the findings.**

This Process has been followed in BWH Radiology since February 2006

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