Hospital group says 'alarm fatigue' can be deadly

April 8 2013, by Lindsey Tanner

(AP)—Constantly beeping alarms in hospitals are being linked to patient deaths and other dangers in a new alert from the Joint Commission.

The alarms can lead to "noise fatigue," and doctors and nurses sometimes inadvertently ignore the sounds when there's a real patient emergency, possibly resulting in treatment delays that endanger patients.

That's according to the alert issued Monday by the Joint Commission hospital accrediting group.

The group says a government database lists more than 500 deaths potentially linked with hospital alarms in recent years.

The commission says hospital leaders need to address the problem and train staffers in safe alarm management.

The Joint Commission accredits more than 10,000 U.S. hospital and health care organizations. Hospitals covet accreditation and following commission advice is key to maintaining it.

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