

5

PROTECTING PATIENTS' PHI

## Reasons hospitals value encrypted pagers



# The state of paging: It's not what you think

Yes, pagers have a reputation for being “old technology” and there’s no question that smartphones, tablets, and other devices have changed how people communicate in healthcare. But while some physicians and other clinical staff have migrated to using smartphones for time-sensitive communications, pagers remain key for many personnel, especially now that encrypted pagers are available for use in environments that demand HIPAA compliance. In fact, the use of pagers in healthcare organizations has remained relatively consistent in recent years. But, more on that later.

So, why are many leading hospitals still maintaining their paging systems while adding many other device types to the mix? In this eBook, we’ll explore why healthcare organizations still value pagers for their reliability, simplicity, and longevity among physicians and nurses on the frontline of care, as well as nonclinical care team members “behind the scenes.”

We’ll look in depth at the technologies at play and how they actually work in different ways to keep staff in touch about important patient care activities. Plus, you’ll see how pagers are filling a crucial role in the response to COVID-19.



## What is a paging network?

There are two types of paging networks: Wide-area and on-site paging.

With wide-area paging, transmitter towers provide service to all pagers in the area. On-site paging means that the transmitters and terminals operate within a particular campus environment and function as a standalone paging system where devices work just at that location.

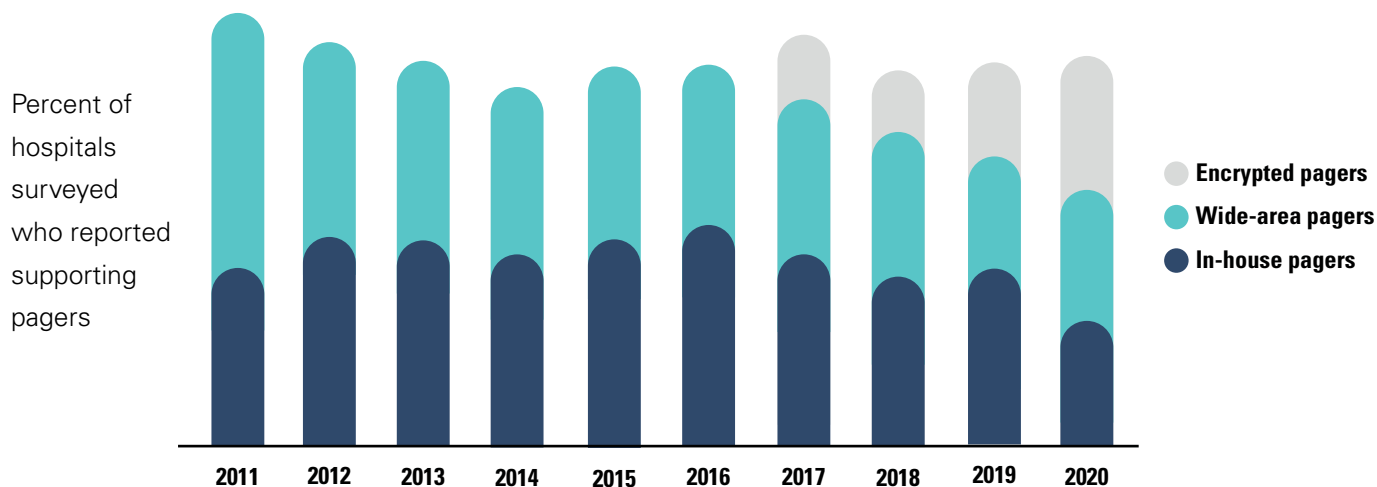
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## Pagers' popularity

They're not going anywhere anytime soon

Since 2011, hospitals and health systems have consistently added support for additional devices. Smartphones have remained the No. 1 supported device since 2012. Yet, pagers continue to show their relevancy year-over-year. The growth in encrypted pagers (introduced in 2016) is notable.

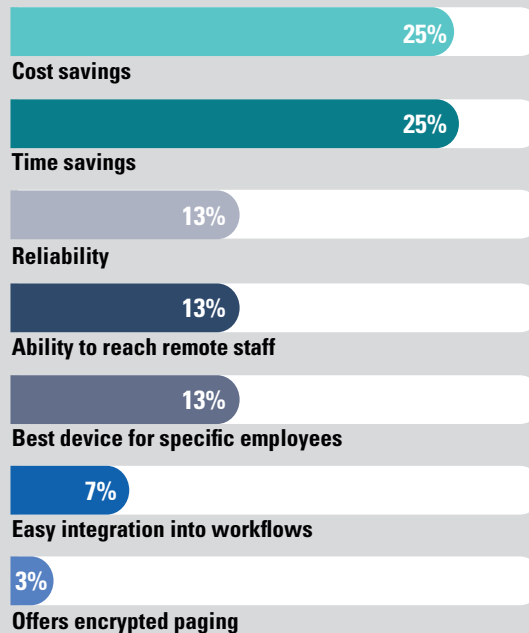
### How has the use of pagers changed over time?



The use of pagers in healthcare organizations has remained relatively consistent since 2011.

**If your hospital currently uses pagers, select the primary reason they're still maintained.**

Hospitals and health systems still use pagers, most often because of their cost and time savings.



# 5 Reasons healthcare organizations value pagers

1

## Pagers support a powerful device diversity approach and complement secure text messaging

Many healthcare systems today integrate pagers into their workflows and secure communications along with smartphones. In fact, 'device diversity' is a powerful approach. Truly effective enterprise-wide communication necessitates the ability to send various staff members a single message and have it received on whichever mobile device they carry. Hospitals need a communication approach that supports their workflows, which likely means different devices for different staff.

**Picture this scenario:** Eli's care team determines he is experiencing a heart attack and operator staff launch a code STEMI. Notifications, including the patient location, are automatically sent to the code team, some of whom use smartphones, some who use pagers, and others Wi-Fi phones.

The operator uses an emergency notification system to deploy a single message, which reaches everyone on the right device. The code team rallies, the balloon procedure is started quickly, supporting improved patient outcomes.



**Operator launches  
Code STEMI**



**Alert is sent to code team's  
mobile devices**



**Code team rallies and  
balloon procedure  
completed quickly**

Some secure texting apps support critical healthcare communication by integrating with the hospital's directory and on-call information. Smartphones can work hand-in-hand with pagers, as both can receive alerts from patient monitoring, nurse call, and other communication systems. When hospitals evaluate communications technology, finding a partner that offers the ability to send messages to a variety of devices is key.



2

## Not everyone needs a smartphone to do their job

If you have a robust infrastructure for secure messaging, perhaps smartphones are the best fit for your physicians and nurses. But what about the nonclinical members of the care team, such as housekeepers, transport technicians, and phlebotomists?

These roles typically don't need EHR access, clinical decision support, or other clinically-focused applications, so the inexpensive pager fulfills their communication needs. Plus, smartphones are expensive, regardless of whether an organization supports a 'bring your own device' (BYOD) program or provides fully-covered devices to staff.

Again, having a communication system in place that can send messages to all team members, regardless of the devices being used, supports effective care coordination at every step.



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## Encrypted paging supports HIPAA compliance

Many people don't realize that some pagers now offer an important advantage previously only available on smartphones equipped with a secure texting app: encrypted communication.

Encrypted pagers can provide a secure communication option that is also highly reliable even when cellular and Wi-Fi coverage is spotty. This means protected health information (PHI) can be shared seamlessly among staff on pagers and smartphones to meet industry guidelines for sharing sensitive information.



**Did you know the Spok T5 pager is one of only a few devices available that offer an encrypted paging option?**

[Learn more](#)

## 4

### Paging is tried and true—and cost effective

The fact is that paging isn't old technology; it's simple, reliable technology. Its value remains high for critical messaging. It's not affected by lapses in cellular or Wi-Fi coverage. Additionally, paging is exceptionally reliable and cost effective.

In fact, for pennies a day, it's possible to keep a pager on hand and ready to go. There is still nothing even close to paging from a cost-effectiveness perspective. If someone loses a pager, the replacement cost isn't an issue. But if that smartphone goes missing...

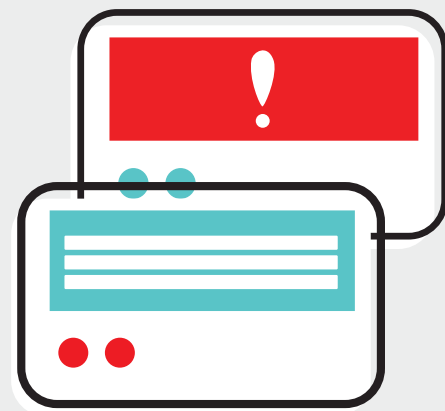
## 5

### Nothing beats paging in disaster situations

While we certainly can't predict when disasters will strike, we can definitely lay the groundwork that will give critical communications the best chance of getting through when almost nothing else can. And that is accomplished only through the reliability and survivability of paging technology.

Most hospitals have defined procedures for disaster response. With their demonstrated reliability in disaster situations and ability to provide secure communications, pagers should be an integral part of this plan.

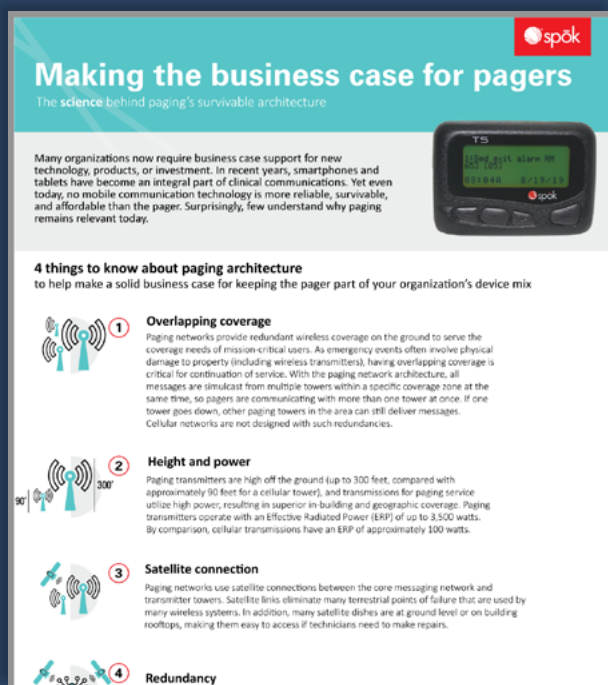
Even if the power is out and Wi-Fi and cellular networks are down, AA battery-powered pagers mean it's easy to remain operational and function independently of the power grid without needing to recharge.



## Need to make the business case for keeping or adding pagers to your device mix?

This infographic explains the science behind paging's survivable architecture and why paging technology is particularly reliable in emergency situations.

Download infographic





## **The unique role of pagers during the COVID-19 pandemic**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, pagers have become more important than ever. Why are they so crucial?

First, they're more reliable than spotty cellular or Wi-Fi coverage. During a crisis or disaster, pagers allow staff to continue communicating when networks are down, or operations are in crisis mode. In addition, pagers work using a simple battery to connect to an extensive, highly reliable external network unrelated to any hospital servers or infrastructure.

## **Conclusion: Device diversity is the name of the game**

Many leading hospitals today seek to integrate encrypted pagers into their workflows and secure communications along with smartphones for maximum benefit and coverage.

The reliable, cost-effective nature of paging provides an excellent communication method not only for roles that don't require smartphones, but also in emergency situations when cellular and Wi-Fi communications can fail. Ultimately, a broad and flexible device-agnostic communications infrastructure supports not only swift, effective care coordination, but also better outcomes.



**Read these tips  
for using pagers to  
help with COVID-19  
communications**

[Read more](#)



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