Bright Ideas

Using a Scientific Approach to Meet Joint Commission AEM Standards

In the March/April edition, Gavin Stern tells us how the release of a new standard by The Joint Commission (TJC) can send TJC- accredited hospitals and their healthcare technology management (HTM) departments on a mad dash toward fulfilling requirements. In 2015, TJC released its revised equipment maintenance standards for critical access hospitals, EC.02.04.01, which aligned TJC with the Centers for Medicare & Medical Services (CMS) august 2014 survey and certification letter 14-41-CAH. EC.02.04.01 includes five elements of performance (Eps). Bur it was EP4 that most concerned the University of Vermont (UVM) Technical Services Partnership (TSP). For TSP, the EC.02.04.01 standard meant that staff would need to evaluate, update, and record PM procedures for more than 10,000 make and model combinations, encompassing nearly 2,000 different types of equipment.

TSP developed a methodology to determine what equipment they should follow manufacturers' recommendations on, what to maintain under AEM, and then to evaluate what the AEM should specify. With limited resources, TSP staff focused initially on high-risk areas: defibrillators and defibrillator/paces, medical lasers, and anesthesia equipment. TSP developed a formalized process and form to develop procedures for each device make and model. The key steps in the process include:

1. Risked-based prioritization process for procedure development
2. Evaluation and correction of inventory make/model inaccuracies
3. Consulting with OEMs to acquire necessary resources for review
4. Documenting key factors, including obsolescence data, personal protective equipment requirements, PM parts, software, cybersecurity parameters, and required test equipment.

This initiative resulted in the development of a detailed, disciplined, and comprehensive process to generate medical device testing procedures currently on the inventory, as well as for new devices that are acquired and added to the inventory.