

MTMC READY FOR MOVING DAY



JIM DAVIS/DNJ

MTMC ready to move most precious cargo

Ambulances to transfer patients

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More than 130 patients will be moved by local and Nashville ambulance service workers on Saturday from the Middle Tennessee Medical Center's University-Street location to its new location across town on Medical Center Parkway.

Plenty of planning and preparation has gone into the move, according to hospital spokeswoman Angie Boyd-Chambers and Rutherford County Emergency



Left: An ambulance pulls in at the emergency entrance at the Highland Avenue MTMC on Thursday. A parade of ambulances will transfer some 130 patients from the hospital to the new MTMC, above, on Saturday.


JOHN A. GILLIS/DNJ

SEE MTMC, PAGE A6

MTMC
FROM PAGE 1

Medical Services spokesman Randy White.

The new MTMC, located at 1700 Medical Center Parkway in the city's Gateway District near Interstate 24, is set to begin tak-



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ing emergency patients at 5 a.m. Saturday — the day of its grand opening.

"A practice transfer was carried out on a small scale about a week ago," Boyd-Chambers told The DNJ this week. White said the move wouldn't be that far off from a "normal day" for ambulance drivers, as they transfer "about 100 patients a day anyway."

White said a route for the transfer was put together by MTMC and RCEMS in an effort to avoid inconveniencing area motorists as much as

possible.

"We will go down Lytle Street and take a right on North Walnut," White explained. "From there we will take a left on St. Clair and cross over Memorial Boulevard, make a right on Jones Boulevard and then turn left onto Medical Center Parkway until we reach the hospital."

White said it is important that local drivers be aware there will be heavy ambulance traffic along the planned route between 5 a.m. until about 3 p.m. Saturday — although the transfer could last a bit longer.

"We just want the public to be aware that we don't anticipate lights and sirens or anything, but in the case it happens to be aware that ambulance traffic is going to be heavy

during that time and on that route," White said.

The current Middle Tennessee Medical Center Emergency Room on Bell Street will stop receiving emergency patients at 5 a.m. Saturday as well, according to White.

"But this will be handled within reason," White said. "If someone goes into the hospital at 5:01 Saturday morning with a heart attack — he or she would be taken in. But for general emergencies after 5 (a.m.), people should head for the new hospital on Medical Center Parkway."

MTMC spokeswoman Erin Yeldell said as soon as any last-minute emergency patient at the current hospital is stabilized, he or she will "be brought to the new hospital."

"Any ambulance pick-

ing up an emergency patient will automatically bring them to (the new hospital) beginning at 5 a.m.," Yeldell added.

Other RCEMS stations will be fully staffed during the Saturday move to handle all regular calls for service, according to White. The ambulances being used to transfer patients will be "off duty reserve ambulances."

"All our stations will be fully staffed that day," White said. "We are using only our off-duty reserve ambulances for the transfer."

The new hospital also includes a helicopter landing pad, according to Boyd-Chambers, which has already been tested by the Vanderbilt University Medical Center's LifeFlight crew.

"It cuts about one mile off the distance to Nashville for the helicopters," Boyd-Chambers said. "LifeFlight crews did comment, however, that the landscaping and space around the heli-pad allows for a much easier approach than the (old MTMC's) landing space."

The helipad is utilized to transport patients out of MTMC who need a higher level of trauma care, according to Boyd-Chambers. But the hospital also receives patients from secondary areas (Shelbyville, Woodbury, etc.) who need higher levels of heart care and intensive neonatal care.

Ambulances adjust routes

Once the move to the new MTMC is completed it will be back to business as usual for RCEMS and other ambulance services who transport to MTMC — although there will be a change in how often local ambulance drivers use the interstate system.

While RCEMS won't be driving new routes for the most part, according to White, the location of hos-

pital does mean the ambulance service will be "utilizing the interstate system a lot more."

"We can hit (Interstate) 24 a lot more often," White said.

However, local ambulance drivers are expecting problems to arise with the hospital's new location as well.

Ambulance drivers are concerned about a lack of a proper traffic signal at the intersection of Medical Center Parkway and Gateway Boulevard, along with the fact that Medical Center Parkway has no "emergency lanes."

"The thing that really concerns us, basically, is where we turn in on Gateway to get to the hospital because there is no light there," White said. "Getting in won't be so much of a problem as it will be getting our units out and that may be the big bottleneck. The front of the hospital is the only controlled intersection there, but where emergency traffic turns in is on Gateway to get to the emergency department."

The lack of emergency lanes for ambulance drivers means that if traffic is backed up along Medical Center Parkway during peak drive times there's no where for them to go around said traffic.

"It really concerns us," White said. "It concerns us that there are no shoulders there and it will be harder to get around traffic."

Regardless, White said, it's a matter of "wait and see."

"That's where the hospital is and we really have no choice," White said. "We are going to have to deal with those situations as they come and our guys are excellent at doing that. We are waiting to see how bad of a problem that is going to be."

Regardless of those potential problems, RCEMS does not expect response times to be affected by the relocation of the new hospital, according to White.

"We don't look for that to happen, but we will watch that over the next six months," he said. "Until we get into it for the next six months we are not going to know exactly what we need to do. Again, I have all the confidence in the world in our folks and we'll transfer patients as safely and quickly as possible."

If the traffic and signal problems do create havoc outside the new hospital for local ambulance drivers, White said it will be up to city leaders to fix the problem.

"(RCEMS Director) Mike Nunley is on top of it and he will be watching to see what kind of change we need to make, if any, and he will address that with the city," White said. "I know our director is in contact with the chief of police and city and county mayor. I understand that city plan-



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