



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Leaders meet to design State Trauma System

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Medical professionals met with representatives of the Alabama Department of Public Health Monday to begin developing a statewide trauma system for Alabama. Comprised of physicians, hospital leaders, paramedics and health department officials, Alabama's Trauma Advisory Council discussed the various trauma levels and established a timeline for the work to be done.

"Alabama is on the verge of doing something great," said State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson. "It's been proven that an effective trauma system that gets patients to the right place in the shortest amount of time saves lives. We have needed such a system in Alabama and are grateful to the state's lawmakers for providing the legislative framework to make this possible."

According to Dr. Williamson, trauma is the leading cause of death for Americans under the age of 45. He added that almost 80 percent of Alabama's trauma cases are caused by motor vehicle crashes and that Alabama has the fourth highest per capita highway trauma death rate in the U.S.

"Even though 90 percent of all injuries are minor and can be treated at the local hospital, the remaining 10 percent who have life-threatening injuries require quick, specialized care in a trauma center," said Dr. Williamson. "In Birmingham, where there is a trauma system, there were 12 percent fewer deaths from trauma than in the rest of the state over a nine-year period. We know it works."

As described, a trauma system is a coordinated system of care that includes emergency medical technicians, a trauma communications system, hospital emergency department staff, trauma surgeons and other physicians who provide the needed surgical and other care. In a trauma system, these providers would work together to determine the best possible course of action for the injured who are reported through the 911 system.

The legislation that provides for the development of the system was passed during the 2007 legislative session and gives oversight authority to the Alabama Department of Public Health.

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