



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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ADPH designates USA Medical Center as Level I Trauma Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health has designated the University of South Alabama Medical Center in Mobile as a Level I trauma center. USA is the first medical center in the Gulf Region of Alabama to receive this official designation following the passage of state legislation in 2007 which established a coordinated system. The center provides the highest level of emergency care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“A Level I center provides a systematic response to trauma that utilizes resources from all medical specialties to meet the special needs of the seriously injured patient at a moment's notice,” Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said. “This organized approach greatly improves the patient's chance for survival.”

Three Alabama hospitals—Children's Hospital of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital, and Huntsville Hospital—had been designated Level I trauma centers prior to the passage of the 2007 legislation. Trauma is the leading cause of death for Americans under the age of 45. Almost 80 percent of Alabama's trauma cases are caused by motor vehicle crashes. Other trauma cases involve falls, drowning, burns and poison ingestion.

Dr. John Campbell, medical director of the Office of EMS and Trauma, said, “We applaud the medical staff at the University of South Alabama Medical Center for its ongoing commitment to trauma care.”

Beth Anderson, USA Medical Center administrator, said, “We're honored to have our Level I trauma center status, and look forward to the development of a statewide trauma system that will mean better care for Alabama's most seriously injured patients.

“As the region's only Level I trauma center, our trauma team has a preplanned coordinated response, ready to implement as soon as a call for help is received,” Ms. Anderson said. “It begins with patient care at the scene of the injury where specially trained health care professionals—including EMTs and paramedics—perform initial resuscitation, treatment and triage of injured persons.

“Transportation to our trauma center is facilitated by ambulance or air ambulance, where the USA Medical Center trauma team stands ready to begin treatment along with all necessary services, including operative care, if needed,” Ms. Anderson said.

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 needed surgical and other care. These providers work together to determine the best possible course of action for the injured persons reported through the 911 system.

Alabama is currently in the process of developing a statewide trauma system which will help save lives and reduce the burden of trauma. The system will improve the chance of survival, regardless of proximity to an urban trauma center. The trauma system is voluntary and all hospitals are invited to participate. Participating hospitals will be designated as levels I, II or III, depending on their resource and service availability. Hospitals are inspected to verify that they can provide the level of care for which they have applied.

Alabama will be the only state in the nation with the capability to constantly monitor the status of every trauma hospital and route the trauma patient to the most appropriate hospital every time. This system will serve as a model for the rest of the nation.

The Alabama Trauma System is built around a high-tech communication center that coordinates patient transport to the appropriate initial facility. The communication center also facilitates transfer of patients who must be stabilized locally before transfer for definitive care. This is accomplished by a staff that monitors a computer network relaying an up-to-the-minute status of all trauma hospitals and resources, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The system is overseen by a quality improvement process that provides an avenue to solve problems while ensuring the highest level of care.