



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Two out-of-state hospitals join the Alabama Trauma System

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Statewide Trauma System is welcoming the first two out-of-state hospitals to its advanced system. Baptist Hospital and Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola, Fla., joined the system on Dec. 2. Both hospitals have been certified by the Alabama Department of Public Health as Level 1 Trauma Centers and will provide support and backup for the in-state trauma centers in the Gulf and Southeast trauma regions. Participation by hospitals, both in-state and out-of-state, is voluntary and critical to the successful operation of the system.

With a trauma system in place, injured patients are identified by emergency medical technicians at the scene who then route the patient to the closest hospital with the resources best able to care for the type of injury sustained. The EMT contacts the trauma communications center, which monitors the current availability of resources of all hospitals in the area. Through this communication, the coordination of air and land transportation is accomplished with greater speed and ensures patients are routed to the hospital that is best prepared to handle their medical needs. For some patients living near the Florida, Georgia, Mississippi or Tennessee borders, an out-of-state trauma center may be the closest hospital.

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.

"Because trauma patients' survival rates improve dramatically when they are evaluated, treated and transported to the correct hospital within the first hour after being injured, this system is saving lives," said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer. "In fact, Alabama has one of the most sophisticated communications systems in the country, which is serving as a model for other states."

One example of the successful utilization of the state trauma system followed an ammonia leak at a Mobile plant in August. A giant plume of ammonia escaped from a roof pipe which sickened more than 120 people. The Trauma Communications Center was immediately accessed to check for the hospital availability and patients were appropriately routed to area hospitals, saving lives and improving outcomes.

"This system helps save lives of trauma patients, and we applaud the commitment of these Pensacola hospitals to participate in the Alabama system," said Dr. John Campbell, medical director of the Office of EMS and Trauma of the Alabama Department of Public Health.

In March 2007, Alabama established a statewide trauma system with the enactment of Act

Number 07-299. This act requires the establishment of Regional Trauma Advisory Councils to work with and advise the State Trauma Advisory Council.

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.

For more information, contact Dr. John Campbell, EMS and Trauma Medical Director, at (334) 206-5383.

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