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LIVINGSTON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL DESIGNATED COMMUNITY TRAUMA HOSPITAL

Livingston Memorial Hospital announced it has received Community Trauma Hospital designation from Montana's State Trauma Care Committee (STCC). This confirms the temporary designation received in November 2006.

"This full designation allows a rural facility like ours to provide an organized, systematic approach to trauma care, which will improve the patient's outcome and chances of survival," explains Tina Barker, RN, BSN, Trauma Program Coordinator at Livingston HealthCare. The three-year certification signifies that Livingston Memorial Hospital will provide high levels of care and assure quality improvement through a collaborative effort with pre-hospital personnel, other departments in the hospital, and regional trauma committee members.

"Trauma is the leading cause of death for all Montanans between the ages of 1 – 44 years, outnumbering cancer, heart disease, and stroke," said CEO Sam Pleshar. "Specifically, in Park County, it is the second leading cause of death for all ages after heart disease. We have made this commitment because of what it can mean for our patients and this community."

Trauma center designation guarantees immediate availability of surgeons, anesthesia, physician specialists, trauma nurses, and resuscitation life support equipment 24 hours a day to care for severely injured patients. The designation also includes a commitment to staff education and training on advanced trauma skills. All emergency room physicians and hospital RNs are required to be trained in areas such as advanced cardiac life support, pediatric advanced life support, and advanced trauma life support.

Trauma patients are so designated by their injuries, vital signs, and/or mechanism of injuries. Examples include motor vehicle accidents, severe head injuries, or amputations. The number of trauma cases treated at Livingston Memorial Hospital is on the rise. In 2006, there were 40 trauma cases in the Livingston area, which consists of Gardiner, Cooke city, Mammoth, Clyde Park

and Wilsall. In 2007, the number rose to 42 traumatic injuries, 36 of which were motor vehicle-related.

“The pre-hospital care also plays a critical role in this process,” added Pleshar. “Just as we have been working hard to maintain our Community Trauma Hospital designation, local EMS providers have been improving their skills as well.” For example, there are now 2 Critical Care Paramedics with 2 more scheduled for critical care training, 7 Paramedics and 9 Emergency Medical Technicians on the Livingston Fire and Rescue team, with 3 more currently taking the paramedic training. This level of training allows local emergency services to provide more care at the scene and better information for the trauma team before the patient even arrives at the hospital.

“I think this increase in both our training levels and the hospital’s training levels has made a huge difference in patient outcomes,” said Jim Mastin, Fire Chief, Livingston Fire and Rescue. “We can work as a team to more quickly assess and treat patients on site and on route to the hospital, and it enables everyone to communicate more efficiently. The new processes and training are not only saving lives in trauma situations, but in many other cases as well, such as heart attack and stroke.”

The Community Trauma Hospital designation does not change referral patterns for Livingston Memorial. Barker emphasized that patients who need more specialized care will still be transferred to larger facilities. “This does not mean that we will try to take care of patients here that we don’t have the advanced resources for,” she added. “But it does mean that we’ll be ready for those patients and we can better prepare and stabilize them until they get to the care they need.”

Billings Clinic and St. Vincent’s Hospital in Billings (Level II Trauma Facilities) are the major referral centers for Livingston and eastern Montana. If patients need a higher level of specialized care, they will be transferred to Denver, Idaho Falls, Salt Lake City, or Seattle.

The Community Trauma Hospital designation was awarded by Montana’s State Trauma Care Committee (STCC). The State Trauma Care Committee was created in 1995 to reduce the incidence of trauma injuries in Montana and to promote and advance excellence in the care of the injured patient. Members of the committee are appointed by the Governor. The STCC created this state level program for trauma certification to encourage participation by Montana hospitals, especially smaller, rural hospitals that previously may not have had financial resources to apply for certification through the American College of Surgeons.

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