



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOSPITAL PRACTICES PATIENT EVACUATION DRILL

Scenario: The hospital has received lightning damage to the roof and infrastructure and an intensive care unit patient has to be evacuated immediately.

This situation formed the basis of the most recent disaster preparedness training at Livingston Memorial Hospital. Last week, nearly thirty hospital staff, plus five staff members from Evergreen Livingston Health and Rehab, worked together to safely evacuate the critical patient and secure their transfer to another facility.

“This is an essential part of our ongoing training efforts,” said Marsha Vanderhoff, Livingston HealthCare Patient Services Director. “It is really important that our staff regularly prepares for real disasters so we know what to do, what resources are available, and what agreements are already in place.”

Livingston HealthCare’s disaster preparedness training includes regular tabletop drills during the year, at least one “live” drill per year, and regular meetings of an emergency preparedness committee to ensure adequate policies, equipment, and training for the organization.

“The state of Montana actually required that we perform a critical patient evacuation drill,” added Vanderhoff. “This spring, there were several hospitals in the Midwest that had to evacuate all patients due to flooding. That’s a reminder to all of us that we need to have plans in place for moving one—or fifty—patients out of our facility.”

In this scenario, staff secured patient medications, portable equipment, and a nurse to monitor the patient’s care. The hospital and Evergreen already have an agreement in place for transferring patients in an emergency, but had not performed a test for the procedure. During the drill, LHC staff learned that the patient’s bed would not fit through Evergreen’s front entrance. They were able to use a side fire entrance, once Evergreen’s staff members could locate the special key.

“Even when we talk about a potential disaster and plan for things like losing communications or staff not being able to get to the hospital, we still can’t know all of the details that are important—like whether a bed will fit through a particular door,” she said. “The more we know, the better we’ll be able to take care of our community in a real situation.”

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