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Emergency Ambulance Traffic to Doctors Medical Center Ends on Thursday, Aug. 7

Further loss of doctors, nurses and hospital workers necessitates re-routing of West County emergency ambulance traffic to other East Bay ER's earlier than previously announced

San Pablo, Calif., Aug. 6, 2014—With Doctors Medical Center continuing to lose staff in the wake of an unsuccessful tax measure to keep the facility open, hospital and county health officials have agreed to stop emergency ambulance traffic to DMC starting Thursday at 7 a.m.

DMC and county health officials had originally planned to begin re-rerouting emergency ambulances to other hospitals on Aug. 12, but decided to move up the date because staffing the emergency room had become increasingly difficult.

“Our shared first priority throughout the fiscal crisis that has been confronting DMC has been maintaining continuity of care, and in the judgment of the county and this hospital, it is time to take this step,” said Dawn Gideon, DMC’s acting chief executive officer.

Patricia Frost, director of Contra Costa Emergency Medical Services, said the county agency is prepared to adapt to the impending service changes in West County. Contra Costa EMS has been working with area hospitals, ambulance providers, and EMS systems in Marin, Solano and Alameda counties to ensure patients re-routed from DMC receive adequate and timely medical care.

“We have been working for months to ensure we will be able to meet the 911 transport needs of West County residents,” Frost said.

Although DMC will no longer accommodate emergency ambulance traffic, its emergency department will remain open for walk-ins and continue to receive transported nursing home patients.

Established 60 years ago as Brookside Hospital, DMC has provided roughly 80 percent of inpatient hospital capacity and nearly 60 percent of emergency-room care within its West Contra Costa service area of 250,000 residents.

The hospital, community owned by the West Contra Costa Healthcare District, has been working with county health officials and neighboring hospitals on strategies for closing an \$18 million a year operating deficit at DMC while maintaining emergency, acute and other medical and health care services for West County residents.

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