

The Times

MONDAY, **75¢**
OCTOBER 17, 2011

Here for you **nj.com** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

GETTING READY FOR THE MOVE



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MANCUSO/THE TIMES

Pretend patients are wheeled to ambulances yesterday during a practice transfer drill prior to the opening of Capital Health's Hopewell campus on Nov. 6.

Capital Health stages mock transfer of patients

By Erin Duffy
STAFF WRITER

The conference room at Capital Health's Mercer hospital resembled a war room yesterday.

Dressed in scrubs, street clothes and paramedic uniforms, 15 Capital Health staffers clicked on keyboards, hurriedly answered phones and kept coffee and clipboards within close reach.

Every few minutes, new commands and updates rang out.

"No phones are working in Hopewell," one employee called out.

"Is that real?" someone asked.

"It's real," team leader Ruthann Tobolski confirmed.

The drill was underway.

As Capital Health prepares for the opening of its new \$530 million, 237-bed Hopewell hospital on Nov. 6, officials are also planning for another milestone: the closure of the health-care organization's Mercer campus in Trenton.

Doctors, nurses, EMTs and scores of other staffers were on hand yesterday for a full-scale simulation of the 5-mile



Paramedics Mike Chebra, second from right, and Bill Rosen confer at the command center set up at Capital Health's Mercer campus yesterday, where a mock transfer was underway to practice moving patients to the new Hopewell campus. Also manning the desk are, from left, Lisa McConlogue, director of patient care services, and Ruthann Tobolski, team leader of the command center.

move from the aging Mercer hospital to the gleaming Scotch Road medical center in Hopewell.

A satellite emergency room

will continue to operate out of Mercer, but the hospital will admit no new inpatients on Nov. 6, opening day.

Any remaining patients

— and there could be anywhere from 80 to 120 of them — will have to be transported to the Hopewell hospital on the 6th, adding another layer of

complication to opening day.

It's a scenario Capital Health has been preparing, planning and mapping out for the last three years.

There have been tabletop discussions and mini-moves, but yesterday's drill, complete with ambulance transports and volunteers strapped to gurneys, was the first — and likely the last — full-scale demo.

"There's a tremendous amount of detail to make sure this thing goes smoothly," said Larry DiSanto, Capital Health's executive vice president.

TRANSITIONAL PLANS

A steering committee and logistics company hired for the move have sketched out transitional plans, and officials including Robert Remstein, the vice president of medical affairs, traded notes with leaders at Virtua Voorhees hospital in South Jersey, which underwent a similar move last May.

Elective surgeries and Caesarean sections at Mercer will cease the Wednesday before Nov. 6, in an attempt to cut down on the volume of patients



Paramedics move pretend patients from Capital Health's Mercer campus during a drill yesterday. The exercise was to ensure a smooth transfer of patients when the new Hopewell campus opens Nov. 6.

Move

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A01

needing transport.

Yesterday at Mercer, the conference room became an incident command center.

Command leaders Tobolski, a patient services director, and Jamie Chebra, an emergency services manager, led a team of nurses, EMTs, department directors and other officials through the drill, which began at 8 a.m.

Three easels labeled "Mercer" "Enroute" and "Hopewell" stood at the front of the room with color-coded sticky notes

representing mock patients and their locations.

A large screen broadcast the hospital's patient tracking system, showing staffers the transport status of patients with fakes names like "Wilma Flinstone" and "John Wayne."

THREE ROUTES

On the day of the move, patients will be transported to Hopewell along three routes, each coded red, blue and green and to separate patients by medical conditions — red is for labor and delivery and the most seriously ill patients, for example.

"I told them to hit me with their best stuff. We built in scenarios to challenge us so even when the big move comes we've covered as many of the issues as possible."

Registered Nurse Ruthann Tobolski, head of the command center

