

# New Device Speeds Emergency Evacuation of VA Hospital Patients



Photo by Fran Burke, MEDVAMC Public Affairs Specialist

Staff members from Nursing Unit 4B at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center participate in a training exercise for the Evacusled emergency patient evacuation device. From left, Mary Hudson, RN, Gloria Berry, LVN, and Diana Hughes, RN. Tina Hall, RN poses as the patient. Once deployed, the Evacusled cocoons the patient and mattress together along with any IV bags, oxygen tanks, and other life support devices.

**HOUSTON** – The Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (MEDVAMC) recently installed emergency evacuation devices on its inpatient beds for non-ambulatory patients.

Using the “Evacusled,” MEDVAMC staff members can now quickly and easily move patients down stairwells, through corridors, and out of the building to safety. With hurricane season here again, this gives patients and staff added peace of mind.

The Evacusled, which looks like a large banana peel, is placed directly under the mattress of a patient’s bed and is easily accessible by a trained staff member. Once deployed, the Evacusled cocoons the patient and mattress together along with any IV bags, oxygen tanks, and other life support devices. The apparatus, which has 25 casters on the bottom, is slid off the bed frame with the mattress and patient. The entire process only takes moments and the

patient remains safe, warm, and comfortable.

“Our nursing staff was very apprehensive about this new device until they participated in training and demonstrations. It’s easy to use the Evacusled and only takes a short training period to learn. Now, the nurses comment on how easy deployment and evacuation will be in an emergency situation,” said Kim Henderson, MEDVAMC safety specialist.

The Evacusled device incorporates built-in protection for a patient’s head and spine during evacuation. Through its engineering design, the risk of back injuries for staff members is reduced as patients are pulled and not lifted from danger as compared to older methods of evacuation. Because patients remain close to the ground, exposure to smoke or other toxins is also minimized.

“The great thing about the Evacusled is how easy it is to work with. It will allow us to better utilize our nursing resources because it takes only one nurse to prepare a patient for evacuation. In an emergency situation, saving lives matters most,” said Aiza LeBron, R.N., Neurology/Rehabilitation Unit nurse manager.

“This new technology will be a very effective means of evacuation and will make the jobs of our first responders easier. The level of preparedness by staff here will be higher and more efficient during an emergency. The Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center delivers high quality health care to our veterans and this new device is just another improvement,” said Henderson. ♦ *Fran Burke, MEDVAMC Public Affairs Specialist.*