

## PRACTICING EXIT PLANS

Glens Falls Hospital holds evacuation drill to test out new devices  
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GLENS FALLS -- As smoke filled the third floor of Glens Falls Hospital's South Wing on Tuesday, BOCES nursing student Allison Enney was cocooned into her hospital bed mattress via an "Evacusled" and pulled down a hallway and three flights of stairs.

Outside, the Warren County Mobile Resource Unit inflatable shelter was waiting, along with eight emergency service agencies.

The 9 a.m. drill, complete with fake smoke, was scheduled to test the hospital's new Evacusled equipment, said Laura Stebbins, the hospital's director of emergency preparedness and patient safety.

Evacusleds are installed directly onto a patient's bed, under the mattress. In the event of emergency, a staff member wraps the sled around the patient, securing the patient to the mattress. Small wheels on the Evacusled's underside then enable a rescuer to roll the patient to safety.

Stebbins said the hospital acquired 60 Evacusleds six months ago and planned the drill to complete the staff's training on the new equipment.

Nationwide, Evacusleds are becoming commonplace in hospitals, thanks to their successful use during hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The Evacusleds were purchased for the region's hospitals under a Regional Resource Center grant from the state Department of Health.

Stebbins said the devices have been installed on all beds on the upper floors of the hospital that contain immobile patients.

"The drill evacuated about 15 patients in a fire scenario," Stebbins said Tuesday. "We used the South Wing because there are currently no patients staying there."

That wing of the hospital has not been a patient care unit since the hospital's new tower opened. The space is now used for office and storage space.

Mock patients for the drill included student volunteers from BOCES and Adirondack Community College.

And while Enney thought the ride down the stairs on a mattress was "great," the value of practice with the equipment was also made apparent.



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Nurse Michelle Bavaro and safety specialist Bill Jeremias use an 'Evacusled' to evacuate BOCES nursing student Allison Sparks during a drill at Glens Falls Hospital on Tuesday. Emergency personnel, hospital staff and BOCES nursing students were participating in a 'smoke condition' drill on the third-floor South Wing of the hospital.

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DEREK PRUITT - [dpruitt@poststar.com](mailto:dpruitt@poststar.com)  
Emergency personnel and Glens Falls Hospital staff participate in an evacuation drill at Glens Falls Hospital on Tuesday morning, April 1, 2008. The hospital recently acquired 60 Evacusleds that are designed to help move immobile patients. The drill helped nurses and other staff to work with the sleds as well as an opportunity for the hospital to work with area emergency response teams.

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"When they rolled it down the stairs, it was a smooth ride. I loved it," Enney said, but added, "I'm sure it'd be scary if it was a real fire. It's important to practice this so you can make mistakes now, and not when there's no room for error."

Hospital patient services employee Donnean Thrall, a petite-framed woman wearing clogs, was surprised she could pull the Evacusled on her own.

"I needed help steering around the corners, but it actually wasn't hard to pull," she said.

The Glens Falls Fire Department ran the drill with the hospital, providing the smoke machines and helping staff evacuate the hallway.

The fire department also evacuated mock patients strapped to emergency chairs and two 250-pound fire dummies.

North Queensbury, Bay Ridge, Empire, Lake George and West Glens Falls rescue squads were also on hand to transport patients to a shelter set up in a side parking lot.

The Adirondack/Saratoga Chapter of the Red Cross was also present.

"These drills give us practice handling a multitude of casualties in a short period of time while working together with various agencies," said Warren County EMS Coordinator Gary Scidmore. "In real time, there would be a response-time factor, of course, but it's good to get this kind of practice in."

Scidmore said the shelter is designed to be used for a range of disasters and can be cooled or heated, set up as a medical shelter or even used as a command center.

"It's for any emergency response agency in the county to use as needed," he said.

Stebbins said the hospital's communication network was also part of the drill, making calls to area nursing homes to find appropriate places for the displaced patients. The hospital's Incident Command System was also engaged, where pre-established emergency leadership roles were put into practice.

"The challenge is organization and safety -- for both the staff and the patients," Stebbins said.



DEREK PRUITT - [dpruitt@poststar.com](mailto:dpruitt@poststar.com)  
Nurses Michelle Bavaro and Donnean Thrall work together to evacuate BOCES nursing student Allison Sparks during a drill on the third floor of the Glens Falls Hospital on Tuesday morning, April 1, 2008. Glens Falls Hospital recently acquired 60 Evacusleds that are designed to help evacuate immobile patients.

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DEREK PRUITT - [dpruitt@poststar.com](mailto:dpruitt@poststar.com)  
Glens Falls Hospital nurse Michelle Bavaro looks through a thermal imaging camera at a hall full of BOCES nursing students after an evacuation drill at Glens Falls Hospital on Tuesday, April 1, 2008. Local emergency responders and hospital staff participated in a 'smoke condition' drill on the third floor of the hospital. The staff worked with new Evacusleds to take patients, played by the BOCES students, down flights of stairs. The Glens Falls Fire Department provided the smoke condition to give people a feel for a real smoke condition.

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