

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Louisville Metro EMS Builds Hospital Network to Speed Heart Attack Care

Goal: reduce time-to-treatment to save lives, heart muscle

LOUISVILLE (May 21, 2009) – Every minute of a heart attack is critical, with blocked coronary arteries preventing blood from reaching oxygen-starved heart muscle. Today, Louisville Metro EMS, the American Heart Association and seven area hospital systems announced a new partnership to improve heart attack care by shortening the time between ambulance arrival and treatment by EMS, and opening the blockage in the hospital cardiac catheterization lab – a procedure called percutaneous coronary intervention or PCI.

The system is designed for STEMI heart attacks (ST-segment elevation myocardial infarctions), which can block blood flow and damage large sections of heart muscle. Using sophisticated technology and building upon guidelines established by the American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline program, Louisville Metro EMS crews will use mobile EKGs to diagnose STEMI heart attacks in the field. Paramedics will then wirelessly transmit these EKGs to the nearest hospital that can perform emergency PCI. While the ambulance is en route, the hospital's cardiac team will be called together for emergency treatment.

“For someone having a heart attack, the risk of irreversible damage to the heart and possible death increases with each and every minute,” said Dr. Neal Richmond, CEO and Medical Director of LMEMS. “So, there's a need for speed. Our paramedics will diagnose these heart attacks and immediately notify the closest hospital team on stand-by. This will compress the time between the call to 911 and critical intervention in the lab. The American Heart Association wants this to happen in less than 90 minutes. Our goal is to beat that standard every time.”

“This important collaboration between EMS, the American Heart Association and hospital cardiac care systems reinforces our city's commitment to providing our community with outstanding emergency medical care,” said Mayor Jerry Abramson. “The STEMI network puts Louisville in elite company – just several large cities are currently starting similar networks, and even fewer have the wireless capability to transmit EKGs in real time.”

“We really appreciate EMS' leadership in putting together this team,” said Ron Alsop, state health alliances director for the American Heart Association. “By involving our community hospitals in this program, and highlighting the need to call 911, we're truly putting the care of heart patients front and center.”

The participating hospitals include:

Baptist Hospital East
Jewish Hospital Downtown
Norton Hospital
Norton Audubon
University Hospital
Clark Memorial Hospital
Floyd Memorial Hospital