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## **Louisville Buys Portable Field-style Hospital**

By Sheldon S. Shafer

sshaffer@courier-journal.com  
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When it's deflated and stored, it's a block 6½ feet long by 3 feet square.

But seven minutes later, when fully inflated by a small pump, it's an 850-square-foot, field-style hospital made of neoprene rubber that can accommodate up to 20 stretchers.

Once inflated, it can be outfitted with its other equipment — heating- and air-conditioning units, patient monitors, intravenous and cardiac-care equipment, stretchers, lights, privacy curtains and a 15,000-watt generator.

The Kentucky Department of Public Health, using federal Department of Health and Human Services money, has awarded Louisville a \$256,000 grant for a "surge shelter" that should arrive in a week or two, said city spokeswoman Kerri Richardson.

It resembles a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, said Dr. Neal Richmond, director of Louisville Metro Emergency Medical Services, which will be the caretaker of the shelter. The deflated unit can go in the back of one ambulance — the support gear will require a second vehicle — and be quickly moved to the scene of a disaster, such as a flood or tornado, or "if worse comes to worst, another significant terrorist event," Richmond said. And city officials plan to have the shelter available at major events, including the Kentucky Derby. They hope to have it for its first use when Louisville plays host to the Ironman triathlon competition Aug. 26. Thousands will compete in long-distance swimming, running and biking, and "we may have some patients on our hands," Richmond said.

The shelter is being purchased from Zumro, a leading maker of inflatable shelters based in Hatboro, Pa.

The city's shelter is the largest and latest version of Zumro's inflatable facilities, and the only other purchaser of this model so far has been the city of Chicago, said Chrissy Gagliardi, a customer-service representative for Zumro.

"It's brand new. It's the biggest shelter we have," she said.

Louisville officials have agreed to make the shelter available to other area jurisdictions, including Fort Knox, Richmond said, adding that "there is a big push through (the U.S. Department of) Homeland Security to create a regional response system" for disasters.

"We hope the shelter will lessen the load on emergency rooms during large events and allow some people with less-serious injuries to stay out of the hospital altogether," Richardson said.

The shelter could serve as a triage area, intensive-care unit, or even a quarantine facility in the event of a large-scale release of a dangerous chemical.

Richmond said a plan is being developed for the shelter's deployment, including identifying medical professionals, perhaps including some retired doctors and nurses, willing to be on call to staff the shelter.

Reporter Sheldon S. Shafer can be reached at (502) 582-7089.