

After controversy, new hospital set to open in Huntley



Centegra Hospital workers participate in a drill involving a mock patient entering the ER with a heart condition Aug. 3, 2016, in Huntley. (John Konstantaras / Chicago Tribune)

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When the new Centegra Hospital opens Tuesday in far northwest suburban Huntley, its hundreds of employees and associates already will have practiced treating patients.

Using volunteers to play the roles of patients, teams of nurses, emergency medical responders and other staff members have gone through a number of drills in preparation for the opening. The simulations have included the arrival and treatment of a 22-year-old woman with a cardiac emergency, a high-risk birth of twins and a knee replacement.

The clinical workers also have collaborated with information technology staff to make sure that vital information on each patient is shared efficiently among all departments.

"The practices have been going great," Sheila Senn, Centegra Hospitals senior vice president and chief operating officer, said last week as mock "code blues" could be heard announced throughout the building.

The five-story, 128-bed hospital set on 110 acres employs nearly 500 and is the third new hospital to open in Illinois in the past 35 years.

Hospital officials said they were ready for opening day and were planning for a mass entrance at 6 a.m. Tuesday of all employees who are scheduled to work the first shift in the hospital. Patients can begin arriving an hour later. Procedures including a cardiac catheterization and a Cesarean-section birth already are scheduled for Tuesday.

Hospital officials touted what they said were special features to make the building secure and environmentally friendly and to reduce the risk of infections spreading from patient to patient.

Ambulances will be able to enter in an enclosed garage where the door automatically opens with the weight of the vehicle.

The hospital also will partner with several colleges to offer training to nurses and other students in the medical and emergency response field.

The property, surrounded by residential neighborhoods, was purchased in 2006.

In 2008, Centegra, which also runs hospitals in [McHenry](#) and [Woodstock](#), built a fitness center and an immediate care center on the Huntley site. In December 2010, Centegra filed an application for a certificate of need with the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board.

Other area hospitals opposed Centegra's plan, arguing the area was well-served by existing facilities in Barrington, McHenry, Woodstock, Elgin and Harvard.

The Centegra plan became the subject of a thorny legal battle and needed four votes by the review panel before it was approved. One competing hospital group that opposed Centegra's plan, Mercy Health Systems, also had sought earlier to open a medical center nearby in Crystal Lake, but that was ultimately rejected amid a bribery scandal on the planning board that led eventually to the indictment of then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Coincidentally, Blagojevich is due to be resentenced for his corruption conviction Tuesday, the same day the hospital opens.

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