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First trauma center opens at Osceola Regional, reduces transport times

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Disease Control.

Instead of having to transport trauma patients at least 20 miles to Orlando, local first responders are rushing them to Osceola Regional Medical Center

in Kissimmee.

"It's going to save lives and that's what we're in the business for," said Kissimmee Fire Department Chief David Kilbury. "It's a huge thing for the community and for public safety agencies."

Kilbury said the trauma center is significantly reducing transport times for local trauma patients during what's known as the "golden hour" – the 60 minutes after a serious injury or health emergency during which a patient stands a better chance of survival if treated.

"In our service we say 'time is tissue,'" Kilbury said.

Circulatory shock, commonly known as shock, is caused by blood loss and is one of the most common concerns for trauma patients. Before a patient bleeds out and dies, shock can cause permanent organ damage.

"The faster you can get people to treatment to reduce that damage, the greater their chances of survival are and the fewer disabilities they are likely to have," Kilbury said.

The paramedic in charge at the scene typically makes the call for a "trauma alert," which notifies the hospital of the incoming case. Patients must be suffering from specific issues to trigger such a call. Victims of severe car accidents and gunshot wounds are common trauma patients.

Osceola Regional's Level II trauma center opened May 1 after getting provisional approval from the Florida Department of Health.

Trauma centers vary in their specific capabilities throughout the country but most are identified by "Level" designations granted by individual states, with Level I being the highest. In Florida there are three designations: Level I, Level II and Pediatric.

Osceola Regional spent six months building the infrastructure for the trauma center, including renovating the emergency room, adding two new trauma bays and hiring more specialized doctors and nurses.

Hospital staff members also have logged nearly 7,000 hours of specialized training to ensure clinicians throughout the facility are prepared for the high level of care and treatment required by critically ill and injured patients.

Before Osceola Regional opened its trauma center, the closest one for much of Osceola County was Orlando Health in downtown Orlando. Depending on where trauma patients are picked up in Osceola, some could also be taken to the trauma centers at Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne or Lakeland Regional Medical Center in Polk County.

Osceola Regional first began pursuing the trauma center designation in 2012, hospital officials said.

"For many years now, our community has urgently needed greater access to immediate, specialized trauma treatment. As we open our doors to Level II trauma patients, we are honored to help meet our community's medical needs and expand our mission of saving lives," said Osceola Regional CEO Robert Krieger.

A Level II trauma center provides for:

- 24/7 in-house coverage by a trauma surgeon
- 24/7 access to specialty and non-specialty surgeons and physicians
- 24/7 on-call neurosurgeons
- 24/7 on-site anesthesia provider, surgical services team and trauma-trained nurses

About trauma

- Traumatic injury refers to physical injuries of sudden onset and severity that require immediate medical attention. These injuries can result from car accidents, sports injuries, falls and natural disasters, to name a few.

- Trauma is the leading cause of death among Floridians ages 1 to 44. Falls are the leading cause of death for ages 65

and older.

- Florida's death rate for trauma remains higher than the national average.

- During the "golden hour," a 60-minute window following injury, prompt trauma care has the highest likelihood of saving lives.

- Trauma centers are hospitals with the specialized resources and personnel needed to care for severely injured patients.

- Florida's trauma centers have reduced the statewide mortality rate from 6.8 percent to 4.9 percent.

Source: Osceola Regional Medical Center