

BLU-MED tent practices setting up in Uintah Basin

By Deborah Tracy dtracy@ubmedia.biz | Posted: Thursday, May 23, 2013 4:24 pm

This is only a test. If it had been an actual emergency, the BLU-MED Mobile Field Hospital set up in the parking lot behind Ashley Regional Medical Center on Saturday would have been able to house patients, treat the injured, or do any other medical task an overflowing hospital would have needed.

This weekend one of the state's BLU-MED Mobile Field Hospitals was set up as a demonstration for the first time in the Uintah Basin, explained Julianne Ehlers. She is the Uintah Basin regional medical surge coordinator, working for the Department of Health.

The state has a number of these tents throughout the state that can be mobilized wherever they are needed. These field hospitals can ensure a safe, clean environment where advanced level health care can be given in any climate for extended periods of time.

"They brought it here to set it up to see how it will work across from Ashley Regional for a medical surge," Ehlers said. A medical surge can result from a variety of circumstances, whether it be a man-made or natural disaster that overwhelms hospital capacity, or something that causes the hospital or other health care facilities to be unusable, requiring patients to be cared for elsewhere.

One of the things being tested Saturday was whether the tent, which was set up in a parking lot and therefore not tethered to the ground, would remain stable in the winds generated by the Classic Lifeguard Air Medical Services helicopter landing at the hospital's near-by helipad.

The helicopter approached the tent from a variety of directions, and the tent remained stable in its location.

When it is deployed, the tent comes with a trained Medical Strike Team that can come in and relieve and assist local medical personnel.

Don Marrelli, a strike team director, was on hand for the test and demonstration. "It's important mostly for rural areas. If these small hospitals such as Vernal are overrun by a large disaster, then we would be able to bring in this resource."

"We have had some big things in the Basin recently, with the Jensen explosion and some of the well fires," Ehlers said. "It helps us to remember how remote we are and we will have to rely on outside resources."

She was pleased with Saturday's demonstration. "It's been a good example, and it helps the local

responders understand how the state plays a part in helping us . . . it's good to know what we can draw on and what our resources are," she said.

In addition to the BLU-MED tent, also on hand Saturday and available in times of trouble are a variety of different trailers. One on display housed the medical supplies that can be brought on-scene in the event of a big disaster; the other houses the supplies 12 people on a Medical Strike Team will use when responding to a disaster. The tent itself is self-sufficient in terms of energy, and can be reconfigured to either house patients, become a medical surgery suite, or monitor patient's medical conditions.

All the state's tents can be hooked together in different configurations depending on need.

"Ashely Regional is really active in their emergency preparedness, and with the Uintah Basin EMS Council they like to exercise all of their emergency capacities," said Ehlers. "This is one of those assets that we needed to see up close and personal."