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## Doctors Medical Center Moves to Reduce Services Due to Staff, Financial Losses

*Presentation on changes scheduled for Tuesday before  
West Contra Costa Healthcare District Board*

SAN PABLO, Calif., Aug. 1, 2014 – Ambulances will be diverted from Doctors Medical Center's emergency department beginning Aug. 12 as the hospital adjusts to changes in the wake of employee and physician resignations, Doctors Medical Center and the Contra Costa Emergency Medical Services Agency announced Friday.

In addition, Doctors Medical Center intends to close its STEMI cardiac unit and cap the number of inpatient beds at a maximum of 50, also effective Aug. 12. STEMI is an emergency department program for the treatment of heart attack patients.

Dawn Gideon, acting CEO of Doctors Medical Center, said the hospital is working closely with the county EMS staff and the emergency departments of neighboring hospitals to ensure diverted patients receive adequate and timely medical care.

The Board of Directors of the West Contra Costa Healthcare District will learn more about the changes at its regularly scheduled meeting Tuesday.

“These are the changes that we need to start making due to the loss of hospital staff,” Gideon said. The Doctors Medical Center emergency department will remain open for walk-in services and will continue to receive transported nursing home patients.

"The EMS System is prepared to adapt to any changes that may occur at Doctors Medical Center" said Dr. Joe Barger, Contra Costa EMS Medical Director. "We do not expect to see any adverse impact to EMS response times for the West County community associated with this change but patients who have to travel out of West County for their emergency care will be traveling longer distances."

Established 60 years ago as Brookside Hospital, Doctors Medical Center provides roughly 80 percent of inpatient hospital capacity and nearly 60 percent of emergency-room care within its West Contra Costa service area of 250,000 residents.

The hospital has been losing workers, nurses and doctors in the wake of the failure of the Measure C parcel tax—placed on the ballot as a last ditch bid to close an \$18 million annual operating deficit. Measure C was backed by 52 percent of Healthcare District voters but fell short of the two-thirds approval needed for passage in the May election.

A recent study by the county Health Services identified emergency care as the most urgent need in the West County community. A Stakeholder Group, announced in June by the Hospital Council of Northern and Central California and Contra Costa Health Services, has been meeting regularly to evaluate clinically viable alternatives that retain emergency care and other essential services.

“Our intent is to work with our community partners and the California Department of Public Health to maintain a full-service emergency department in the most viable form to serve the needs of the community,” said Dr. William Walker, County Health Officer and the leader of the Stakeholder Group.

While a number of promising alternatives have been identified, the group is still working out the financial and licensing details before it makes its final recommendation to the healthcare district board later this summer.

“Maintaining Doctors Medical Center in its current form is unrealistic given the financial losses and staff and physician resignations,” said Eric Zell, Chair of the West Contra Costa Healthcare District board of directors. “We are striving to come up with a solution that maintains as much of a full-service emergency department as possible while retaining other services. Financial details are still being worked out.”

The Stakeholder Group is comprised of representatives from the county, physicians, clinics, the West Contra Costa Healthcare District, the state Health and Human Services Agency and top executives of Kaiser Permanente, John Muir Health, Lifelong Medical Care, Sutter Health and the Hospital Council. It also includes experts in health-care finance, medical law and reimbursement who are funded by the member hospitals of the Hospital Council.