Record of Conversations – Cox Medical Center, Branson, MO
DCA18MM028

On the morning of July 22, 2018 NTSB Chief Medical Officer Mary Pat McKay spoke informally with Gary Reed, John Chambers, CoxHealth emergency management leaders.

Cox Medical Center Branson is a 165 bed hospital that does not have a trauma designation. It's part of a 6 hospital system that includes a Level I trauma center (CoxHealth South) in Springfield, MO, about 1 hour away by ground. Systems are unified and staff and patients can be moved easily among the hospitals if needed. In addition, they participate in an 18 hospital coalition in southwest Missouri to share resources in emergencies.

Management had been carefully monitoring the weather situation all afternoon/evening, mostly from home at the time of the storm.

The hospital was first notified of an MCI by both Taney County and Mercy EMS, nearly simultaneously, on the evening of July 19th. The first information was that there were possibly 20 people from a boat sinking. As this occurred at shift change (just after 7 pm), the hospital initiated an internal disaster and kept some staff from the day shift. Three trauma teams were called in. Communications to the scene occurred through cell phones calls with an EMS supervisor on scene, as well as by radio. At the time, the hospital had empty beds available, so the anticipated numbers were not overwhelming.

In the end, the hospital received 7 patients. The hospital stood down the additional staff about 11:30 when it became clear no more patients would be arriving.

The hospital has only one morgue space so it does not participate in the process of holding/accounting for mass fatality events.

Overall, the staff felt their response to the event went well, and so did communications with EMS on scene. Generally, they felt this was because of many years of positive interaction and practice with the prehospital assets in the community.