

For Release: Monday, August 17, 2009

Contact: Joe Barger, 925-646-4690, EMS

Angela Lombardi, SDMC, 925-303-6104

Lifesaving Heart Attack Response System Expanded to East Contra Costa County

Heart attack victims in East Contra Costa have a better chance of surviving with the addition of another hospital to the County's heart attack response system.

Contra Costa Health Services' (CCHS) Emergency Medical Services Division (EMS) has added Sutter Delta Medical Center (SDMC) in Antioch to its STEMI (ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction) System. The STEMI System is designed to allow paramedics to rapidly identify and transport high-risk heart attack victims to specially equipped hospitals or STEMI Receiving Centers. SDMC applied and met the criteria and began serving as a STEMI Receiving Center today.

"The addition of Sutter Delta Medical Center to our STEMI System will improve access to lifesaving cardiac interventions for patients with high-risk STEMI heart attacks," said Dr. Joe Barger, EMS Medical Director. "We anticipate EMS transport time to a STEMI Center will be improved by up to 10 minutes or more for patients in East County with the strategic location of this facility."

Barger said a STEMI, a high-risk heart attack, could be reversed by specialized cardiac procedures that are best given within 90 to 120 minutes of the heart attack victim's first sign of chest pain.

"During a heart attack, a clot blocks the flow of blood to the heart, and heart muscle begins to die," said Barger. "The sooner treatment is started, the better the chance of preventing or limiting damage to the heart. Adding Sutter Delta as a STEMI Center provides one more option for patients"

Barger said the STEMI System begins when fire and ambulance service paramedics, who respond to about 7,000 chest pain calls a year, use a 12 lead EKG to identify STEMI heart attacks on scene. A STEMI Receiving Center is notified to activate its cardiac team and provide specialized treatment as soon as the patient arrives.

"We currently average 83 minutes from the time 911 is called to the time intervention by the hospital cardiac team takes place. The STEMI national standard is 90 minutes from arrival at the Emergency Department to intervention," said Barger. "This makes us a high performance STEMI system which we're truly proud of because it means lives are being saved."

Barger said it is critical for people with heart attack symptoms to call 911 to ensure quick intervention. Symptoms include: discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or that goes away and comes back; pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach; shortness of breath; cold sweat; nausea; or lightheadedness.

For information on the STEMI System and the six STEMI Receiving Centers in Contra Costa that provide 24-hour specialized cardiac catheterization services, visit: www.cccems.org.