

October 7, 2016

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MASCAL tests Evans' emergency response



By Jeff Troth, MEDDAC PAO

Evans Army Community Hospital tested their emergency response systems with a mass casualty exercise October 7.

"This exercise was designed to evaluate the systems we have in place to handle an event that would overwhelm the capacity of Evans," said Lt. Col. David Hamilton, the deputy commander for health and readiness for U.S. Army Medical Department Activity – Fort Carson. "If something overwhelms our capacity we can't just close the doors, we have to find ways to work through that situation and find ways to provide the best support that we can within our capability and then know how to ask for help to outside agencies."

When a mass casualty or MASCAL occurs on Fort Carson, or in the Colorado Springs area, Evans Army Community Hospital communicates with other local hospitals about the event and what each of their capacity for patients is.

"This event helped us practice that system," said Hamilton. "The MASCAL also allowed us to ensure our communication avenues work between us and the Fort Carson fire department, department of emergency services and police services as well as the El Paso county emergency management office."

All these organizations tested their own MASCAL plans when a simulated explosion occurred at a Fort Carson facility resulting in numerous injuries.

"Our staff learned the complexity of interagency cooperation during the MASCAL," Hamilton said. "Our performance should give our patients the confidence that their hospital is able to properly manage a large event and still provide them the great care they deserve."

Evans' continuing mission to provide that care 24/7 meant that the exercise had to be completed with minimum impact on day-to-day medical operations.

“When we put together the training plan we had to look at our exercise goals and at our everyday mission of providing care to our community,” Hamilton said. “Part of our plan was to set ‘aside’ a portion of our ER providers for patients who came in for real emergencies.”

Even the day of the exercise was considered during the planning stage of the exercise.

“The hospital command has chosen training days for our staff that coincide with the 4th Infantry Division’s training holidays,” said Hamilton. “On these days, we have a lower volume of patients in the hospital due to Soldiers across the installation being off, which allows our providers and staff to get up-to-date with their required training.”

Hamilton said that the exercise showed the hospital employees how their sections’ emergency response plan merges with those of other sections. And, that they are able to manage and the large influx of patients that a mass casualty brings in at one time.

“Although this exercise was just one day, we have a daily presence of emergency response here on post and in the surrounding community,” said Hamilton. “MASCAL exercises, like this one, help to ensure that we are upholding our responsibilities to provide expert medical care and to show that the Evans hospital staff is committed to being prepared for emergencies and any events that might need our presence.”



To add realism to the mass casualty exercise Spec. Koetz applies moulage to a “victim’ of the explosion. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Regina Cressler)