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Department of Health Designates Three New Trauma Centers

SANTA FE – Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil announced today that the New Mexico Department of Health has designated three hospitals as new trauma centers in the state -- Gerald Champion Medical Center in Alamogordo, Roosevelt General Hospital in Portales and Carlsbad Medical Center in Carlsbad. With the addition of these hospitals, there are now six trauma centers in New Mexico.

“This represents significant progress in developing a comprehensive trauma system for New Mexico,” Governor Richardson said. “This is great news for the people of southern and eastern New Mexico, who will now have access to better emergency care. When someone suffers traumatic injury every single minute counts.”

Adding three new trauma centers in the southern part of the state - where previously there were none - means patients are more likely to receive appropriate care for less severe injuries in their communities, and patients with more severe conditions will be transferred to other facilities only for a higher level of care.

Trauma centers are classified into four levels. Level I centers provide the most comprehensive range of services. The state’s only Level I hospital is the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center in Albuquerque. The Carlsbad and Alamogordo trauma centers are designated Level III. A broken arm, a lacerated spleen or a fractured rib are types of trauma that a Level III center can assess and treat. New Mexico has two other Level III hospitals, St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe and San Juan Regional Medical Center in Farmington. The hospital in Portales is a Level IV hospital, which means they can stabilize all types of trauma patients and transfer to a higher level facility.

“The designation of these three additional trauma centers is an important step in improving New Mexico's state trauma system,” said Dr. Dale Kester, Emergency Physician and chairman of the Trauma System Funding Authority and Trauma Advisory and System Stakeholders Committee. “This progress will help advance the optimal goal of getting the right patient to the right facility at the right time.”

In 2006, Governor Bill Richardson called for legislation to create a new Trauma Authority along with new funding in order to improve trauma services throughout New Mexico. Once appointed by the Governor, the new Trauma Authority began immediately to work with hospitals and medical centers to develop new centers and to support the three existing centers. In addition, in 2007, the Governor called for funding to enhance Emergency Medical Services - another integral part of the healthcare system.

The Department of Health leads the Trauma System Fund Authority and since 2006, it has distributed \$10.4 million to existing centers and hospitals that are developing trauma systems. Hospitals have used the funding for equipment, professional training, outreach and personnel in order to achieve this

designation. In the next fiscal year, the Trauma Authority plans to continue developing more trauma centers across the state and to move trauma centers into higher level categories.

"We congratulate hospitals that are working hard to provide better trauma care for patients in New Mexico," Dr. Vigil said. "We will continue to support hospitals as they address this critical need."

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