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Media Release

York Central Hospital Committed to Testing Emergency Preparedness!

Richmond Hill, ON: York Central Hospital is committed to ensuring the health, safety and security of patients, visitors and health care team members. To maintain emergency preparedness, the hospital regularly tests a wide variety of critical support systems as well as key emergency response plans. At 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 15, 2008, York Central Hospital held a simulated “Code Green” to test its emergency evacuation procedures. Invited to plan and help test many of the hospital’s emergency response partners including York Region Police, Richmond Hill Fire Department and York Region EMS.

In the test scenario, staff was asked to respond as if an on-site transformer had exploded during repair causing injuries to staff, patients and rendering the Hospital site unsafe. The transformer referred to as part of the test scenario is in the front of the main building and smoke and flames were to be coming out of this machine. Due to the risk of further explosions, in this mock scenario, the Hospital was ordered to evacuate ASAP. As part of the exercise, student and adult volunteers were clearly identified as “mock patients” requiring evacuation during the mock situation.

As Director of Quality and Risk Management and the hospital’s Chief Privacy Officer, Nancy Smokler knows the value of making sure that emergency procedures are tested. “We are in the business of caring for our patients and hospital family,” she says. “Among the responsibilities that we share are making sure that we are prepared in the event that the unthinkable happens. Through tests such as this, we can ensure our staff knows how to keep themselves and their patients and visitors as safe as possible no matter what emergency situation may arise.”

York Central Hospital regularly simulates a variety of emergency scenarios to ensure a high level of readiness in the event that such situations should occur. The evaluation of its emergency procedures enables hospital staff to ensure the quality of services it provides to the community.

Project Coordinator Jackie Samimi was thrilled with the opportunity to organize this test. “Exercises such as this give us the opportunity to check that our emergency plans are as clear and effective as they can be in the event that we ever need to use them. Through the planning of today’s event, I have learned a lot about the organization and its readiness in the event of an internal or external disaster. I’m proud to say, our staff and hospital team members are well prepared.”

Following today's exercise, key representatives will participate in an organization-wide debriefing to talk about what went well, suggestions for areas of potential improvement and how to integrate these suggestions going forward.

"It's all part of our emergency preparedness and continuous quality improvement philosophy," adds Smokler.

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Contact: Stefanie Kreibe
External Relations Officer
905-883-1212 ext. 7484