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<https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/aspr-tracie-healthcare-system-preparedness-considerations-speaker-series-summary.pdf>

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T R A C I E

HEALTHCARE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
INFORMATION GATEWAY

Healthcare System Preparedness Considerations Speaker Series Rising from the Ashes—The Signature Healthcare Response to the Unimaginable



Disclosure

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Rising From The Ashes:

Signature Healthcare's Response
to the Unimaginable

Kim Walsh

August 2025



SIGNATURE HEALTHCARE

Overview

- **Introductory Video – The Event**
- **Developing a playbook when no playbook exists**
 - **Three guiding tenets to move your team forward**
- **Managing Multiple Audiences, including the Board**
- **Motivating and retaining your team and employees over an extended period of crisis mode**
- **Applying political pressure to support the needs**
- **Lessons learned (and there are many)**





Signature Fire Video



The Event

- Audience Evaluation (who needs to know):
 - Involved agencies and first responders
 - Emergency Management and State regulatory
 - Employees, providers
 - Patients
 - Families of patients
 - Other area healthcare facilities
 - Community members
 - Media
- Communicating without email, phones, access to work computers, WiFi



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The Best Laid Plans - Pivot

Emergency Management & Life Safety Committee

- Awareness, Education and Drilling
- Documented and placed in Incident Command
- Drill with area police and fire, other
- Communication Templates
- Addressing communication vehicles or tools



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End of the Day

- A point of reflection
- Darkness where there was always light
- The Realization



Day After the Fire:

More Questions Than Answers

- What just happened?
- What was the extent of the damage?
- How did it start?
- How long will we be closed?
- What should we tell the staff?
- Are people trying to get to work at the hospital?
- How will we pay staff? Cancelling of contracts?
- How do we continue to support our patients? The community?

Day After Fire:

A Number of Audiences

- Audiences:
 - Staff/employees
 - Patients
 - Community
 - Media
 - Government leaders and regulators
 - And more...
- Data dump from Fire Chief, Building Inspector, City Construction Manager, City Electrical Engineer related to infrastructure damage.
 - Provided instruction regarding what can happen in the facility. (These meetings occurred everyday, seven days a week for months.)
- Three-pronged approach
 - Continue to care of our patients
 - Continue to care for our staff
 - Safely reopen the hospital asap



Within a Week

- How do we continue to support our patients' care?
- Moving services to ambulatory sites
- Increase hours to expand access
- Place Hospital staff in ambulatory sites
- 25 medical services where we could increase hours
- Move to develop, build, staff and open two new urgent care centers within three weeks



Beyond the First Week

- Set up internal staffing agency
- Worked with 15 external healthcare organizations in the region to deploy Signature employees temporarily
- Had surgeons credentialed as providers with area healthcare organizations

Other Healthcare issues in the Region

“Uncertainty & Rumors”



The Playbook

- Continue Caring for Our Community
- Care for Our Staff
- Safely Reopen as Quickly as Possible



1st Tenet - Continue Caring for Our Community

- Moved all possible ambulatory services off-site
- Opened 3 Urgent Cares
- Limited Services Hospital
- Leased 70k/sq ft POB
-Recruited 8 PCPs



2nd Tenet – Care for Our Staff

- Paid all FTEs for 60 days post fire
- Created a staffing agency
- Kept employees engaged through various events and promotions
- Negotiated retention bonuses for all employees



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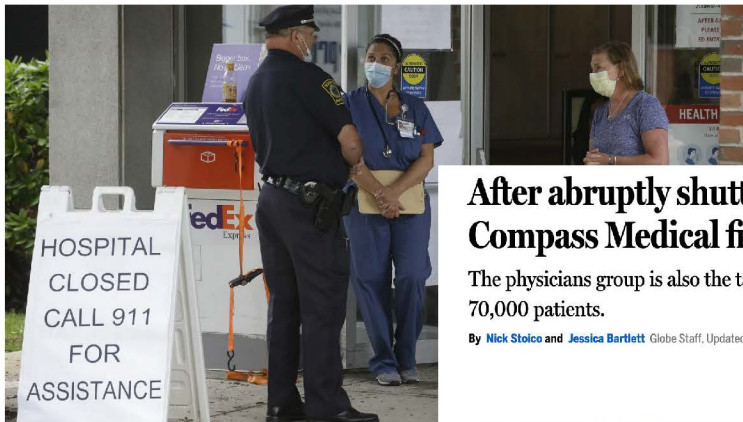
3rd Tenet – Safely Reopen as soon as possible

- **\$85 Million in Repairs**
- **Supply Chain Issues**
- **Insurance Company Approval Delays**

NEWS > LOCAL NEWS

Norwood Hospital remains closed – and the community feels the strain

SHARE



A Norwood, Mass., police officer, left, speaks with medical personnel, Monday, Ju

After abruptly shutting its practices last week, Compass Medical files for bankruptcy

The physicians group is also the target of a class action lawsuit brought by some of its 70,000 patients.

By Nick Stoico and Jessica Bartlett Globe Staff, Updated June 4, 2023, 9:09 p.m.

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The exterior of Compass Medical East Bridgewater, also known as Southeast Medical Center. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

News

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Unpacking Massachusetts' Steward health system crisis

March 6, 2024 – The potential financial collapse of Steward Health Care, which owns nine hospitals in Massachusetts, is a crisis—but it could also provide an opportunity, according to health policy expert John McDonough, to make the state's overall health care system "stronger, better, more patient-centered and community-centered."

Steward's financial problems have led to a lack of

plies in some of its, in some cases endangering patients, according to media reports. In addition, there Steward hospitals will close, leaving communities without crucial health care den on the state's other hospitals.

the practice of public health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, spoke February 26 episode of "The Codcast," a podcast produced by CommonWealth Beacon. with Paul Hattis of the Lown Institute about what went wrong with Steward Health Improve the current situation. He and Hattis have also co-authored recent articles



Hospitals see overwhelming case load amidst Brockton Hospital closure

by MOLLY LEVINE, NBC 10 NEWS | Fri, February 24th 2023 at 10:49 PM

Updated Fri, February 24th 2023 at 11:38 PM



Good Samaritan Medical Center in Brockton, Massachusetts. (WBTS)



(WJAR) — Massachusetts hospitals have been experiencing overwhelming patient volumes after [a fire broke out at Brockton Hospital earlier this month](#), forcing patients out and into area hospitals.

The emergency room volume at Good Samaritan Medical Center in Brockton has doubled since.



Community-Wide Effort for Communication

- Many messages – Challenging and never perfect
- People needed to know the hospital and the ED were closed
- Communication about where to get care and when
- The hospital was closed but care was still available at Signature's outpatient facilities and urgent care Centers
- Signage everywhere
- Call 911 – do not come to our ED – Call 911



Challenges Rebuilding

- Team had to start from scratch with facility drawings.
- Existing infrastructure
- Age of Plan
- Supply chain-long delays for new generators and infrastructure
- State government funding support



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Lessons Learned (and there are many)

- Do not provide a timeline for reopening
- Leverage crisis into opportunity
- Hire a business interruption specialist
- Negotiate, Negotiate, Negotiate
- Make sure you have an excellent insurance policy

Re-opening Challenges

- Recall of Staff
- Execution of all pre-fire contracts for services, materials and MD relationships
- Hiring and training of new staff.
- Timing of hiring with facility readiness.

Programs Launched

- Infrastructure
 - Laboratory, Radiology, Cardiac Cath Lab and Operating Room services were ready
 - Pharmacy and Food Services were not and required waivers from the DPH.
 - IT, Telecom systems restored and activated
 - Emergency Department, Limited Med/Surg and Critical Care opened on August 13, 2024.

Programs Expanded

- Medical Surgical Units opened as volume increased in September and October
- Maternal Newborn services opened in September
- New Ambulatory Surgical Unit opened in October.
- The Hospital sustained a flood in the Main OR and closed 6 Rooms (Story for another Time)
- August 2025 Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit opened



30 Months Later

- Volumes have returned and we are experiencing significant growth in our outpatient services
- Top Issues:
 - Cost of Labor
 - 110 FTEs of Travel Staff in Nursing and Radiology
 - MD recruitment in Radiology and Anesthesia
 - The ongoing issues in an old facility that has been closed for 18 months-pipe leaks and air handling

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