

Staff: Hospital passed test after May 22 crash

By ALEX VANCE

Morrow County Hospital demonstrated the importance of smaller local hospitals May 22 when eight people involved in an automobile crash were brought in for treatment, one member of the hospital's staff said one week after the crash.

"You don't realize you need it until you need it," said Vincent Trago, a radiologist who was working when the patients arrived.

Trago said he helped other staffers prioritize patients based on the severity of their injuries. He noted the hospital was lucky to have X-ray technology students to help.

"We had people with obviously broken bones," Trago said. "These aren't people with stiff necks. This was a bunch of people that were seriously injured."

According to the Mount Gilead Post of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, a south-bound maroon 2005 Pontiac Grand Prix driven by Ronald Hall of Willard failed to yield as it was turning left from US 42 onto Ohio 61 south of Mount Gilead the afternoon of May 22. The Grand Prix struck the northbound silver Chevy Blazer driven by Mary Dye of Mount Gilead, according to the patrol's records.

Hall's vehicle contained two passengers — Billy Hall and Pauline Holmes. Dye's vehicle contained four passengers — Georgia High, Lisa Howard, Brooke Howard and Connor Howard. Both drivers and all of the passengers were transported to Morrow County Hospital. Five — Ronald Hall, Billy Hall, Pauline Holmes, Georgia High and Lisa Howard — were MedFlighted to Grant Medical Center in Columbus. Dye and Brooke Howard were treated at Morrow County Hospital. Connor Howard was uninjured.

As of Monday, Billy Hall and Pauline Holmes were listed in fair condition at Grant Medical Center. Information was not available on the three other patients sent to the Columbus hospital.

Joe Schueler, chief financial officer for the hospital and designated incident commander that afternoon, described his role as that of rounding up more physicians to treat patients and setting up radio com-

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munications between departments.

"We practice this," he said, noting that he had served as incident commander during training exercises.

Mark Davis, an emergency physician, said he could hear helicopters overhead throughout the afternoon.

"I think this was the worst or one of the worst I've been involved with," he said. "You feel like you're in slow motion. You never feel like you're doing anything fast enough."

Cindy Marsh, vice president of Patient Care Services, said she successfully convinced MedFlight to send helicopters immediately after first being told none were available.

Teresa Roe, emergency department manager, said the hospital was tested May 22.

"We passed that test ... Everything that we should have done was done," she said, adding that the charge nurse at Grant praised the work of Morrow County Hospital staffers.

"There's not a whole lot that we've had to address," Roe said, referring to the hospital's evaluation of its response to the influx of crash victims.

Hospital staff agreed that improvements in training and medical technology strengthened the small rural hospital's ability to handle such a situation. Trago noted that X-rays and CAT scans take much less time to process now than when the scans were processed on film. He added that he was able to send X-rays to Grant digitally.

"That's a lot of victims at one time for Morrow County Hospital," said Lois Peoples, public relations manager for the hos-



Sentinel Photo/Alex Vance

Firefighters and officers from the Mount Gilead Police Department, Morrow County Sheriff's Office and Ohio State Highway Patrol responded to a crash at Ohio 61 and US 42 south of Mount Gilead May 22. Five patients were MedFlighted from Morrow County Hospital to Grant Medical Center in Columbus.

pital, adding that the same number of patients coming in at one time would be a challenge for larger hospitals such as Grant. "We are very proud of the way we handled the situation."

In a press release from Morrow County Hospital, trauma surgeon Urmil Pandya at Grant Medical Center commented about the care Morrow County Hospital provided for the Level 1 Trauma patients who were transported to Grant by medical helicopters on May 22.

"Receiving four-to-six trauma patients as quickly as they arrived from the Morrow County accident kept us at Grant very busy," he said. "I can only imagine what it was like for Morrow County Hospital to receive these patients and prepare them to be transported to us. Morrow County Hospital did an excellent job and

should be commended. These patients had been stabilized quickly and transported expeditiously so we could care for them."

Michael Pallaci, an emergency physician at Grant Medical Center, was on duty when Morrow County's Level 1 trauma patients arrived.

"For the first time in my 11-year Emergency Department tenure, I felt compelled to call and really give them (Morrow County Hospital) a pat on the back," he said in a release from Morrow County Hospital. "Those victims will survive and Grant will get a lot of credit because it's a trauma center — we always get the credit. I know that several of these patients wouldn't have made it if it wasn't for the job MCH did in their emergency department."

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A few of the hospital staffers who pitched in after a May 22 crash at Ohio 61 and US 42 are shown. From left to right: Vincent Trago, radiologist; Joe Schueler, chief financial officer; Mark Davis, emergency physician; Jim Davis, RN; Teresa Roe, emergency department manager; and Cindy Marsh, vice president of Patient Care Services.