

# **Arizona's Trauma System**

## **Improving Patient Care**

### **Trauma in Arizona**

More than 24,000 people are severely injured (called trauma) every year in Arizona. More than 60% of these severe injuries occur in the rural and frontier areas of Arizona. Most patients are treated at one of the eight designated Level I Trauma Centers in Arizona, which are concentrated in urban areas. As a result, trauma patients are often transported long distances to receive treatment for their injuries.

In fact, more than 40% of Arizona trauma patients did not reach a designated Trauma Center within the first hour or "Golden Hour" after their injury. Receiving treatment in this first hour may be critical to survival.

Patient care in Arizona can be dramatically improved and costs reduced by developing a coordinated and integrated system of trauma care for the entire state. A recent American College of Surgeons Trauma System Consultation report on Arizona found that while the urban residents of Arizona have ready access to trauma centers, residents in our rural and frontier areas do not.

### **What is a Trauma Center?**

A Trauma Center is a health care institution that has the resources and capabilities necessary to provide trauma services at a particular level to injured patients. Designation as a Level I Trauma Center requires the most resources and capabilities, providing total care for every aspect of injury. Designation as a Level IV requires the least resources and capabilities and typically will resuscitate and stabilize a patient and transfer the patient to a more appropriate Level, based on the patient's injuries.

### **What is a Trauma System?**

A Trauma System is a statewide, organized system of emergency medical care for seriously injured patients. Components of a Trauma System include the 9-1-1 dispatchers, first responders, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, air and ground ambulances, emergency departments, trauma centers and rehabilitation centers.

An effective Trauma System ensures that each trauma patient is cared for at a health care institution with the resources and capabilities that match the patient's treatment needs, resulting in the best and most cost-effective care possible for the patient and in the best and most cost-effective use of the health care institution's resources. Nationally, the benchmark for trauma care is for a patient to arrive and begin treatment within one hour of the injury.

A trauma system applies collaborative medicine and a continuous process of assessment, treatment and reassessment. It ensures that no matter where in the State of Arizona patients are injured, they will be treated in a timely fashion by the facility which has the best ability to care for their injuries.

### **Current Status of Arizona's Trauma System**

The Arizona Department of Health Services has established criteria and standards for designating trauma centers at varying levels based on a hospital's resources and capabilities. In Arizona, participation within the system is voluntary. Currently, there are eight Level I Trauma Centers in

Arizona. These Level I Trauma Centers receive significant funding from the State to maintain their Level I designation status. However, there is currently no funding available to assist or encourage Level II, III, or IV designation. Additional Trauma Centers at varying levels throughout the State are needed to provide timely and appropriate trauma care for Arizonans. The first Level IV Trauma Center designation was issued in September 2008 in Show Low, Arizona. Subsequently, there have been five more rural hospitals designated as Level IV Trauma Centers.

The Arizona Department of Health Services has developed a presentation to educate hospital administrators on designation in an effort to recruit them into our State Trauma System. The presentation provides information on the social and financial impacts of participation through a cost/benefit analysis to the hospital. This presentation has been well-received, and is one of several steps in building Arizona's trauma system from the ground up.