

News Release

Contacts: David Tonelli
(702) 759-1393

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Increase Observed in Number of Patients Visiting Local Emergency Rooms

Public urged to utilize urgent care facilities and physicians for non-life-threatening conditions

LAS VEGAS - Dec. 30, 2005 - The Clark County Health District Emergency Medical Services (EMS) program, which provides medical direction and protocols for the county's emergency response system, has noted a rise in the number of patients seeking services at local emergency rooms. The spike in emergency room traffic was observed through monitoring systems and direct reports from hospital emergency departments. Because crowded conditions have the potential to impact patients with serious conditions, the health district reminds the public to utilize area urgent care centers or primary care physicians for non-life-threatening illnesses like colds and flu.

"We need to make sure that local emergency room beds and staff resources remain available to the patients that need them the most," said Rory Chetelat, EMS Manager for the health district.

The public can help alleviate crowded emergency departments by following the guidelines listed below when seeking urgent or emergency health care:

When should I go to an urgent care facility?

Urgent care provides treatment of injuries or illnesses that are not life threatening but need immediate attention. Typical complaints that are appropriate for urgent care include:

- Upper respiratory infections, like colds or flu
- Coughs and congestion
- Lacerations (deep cuts or wounds that may require stitches)
- Sprains, strains or contusions (deep bruises)
- Mild to moderate asthma attacks
- Ear infections
- Urinary tract infections

(more)

- Diarrhea
- Sore throats
- Insect bites
- Rashes

When should I go to an emergency department?

If you or someone else experiences a life-threatening illness or injury, call 9-1-1 to get professional help immediately. Examples of life-threatening symptoms include:

- Severe bleeding
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain or pressure
- Broken bones
- Partial or total amputation of a limb
- Trauma or injury to the head
- Sudden dizziness or difficulty seeing
- Severe abdominal pain

Crowding of local emergency departments has resulted previously, due in part to rapid population growth in the Las Vegas valley. In July 2004, a state of emergency was declared when mental health patients occupied 108 of the county's 350 emergency room beds. Currently, there are 70 such patients in emergency room beds awaiting transfer to a mental-health facility. An expansion of the state mental health hospital due to open in May will further reduce the number of mental health patients in local emergency departments.

###