

## Thunder Bay Source Newspaper

### Local News

# Mock disaster at TBRHSC

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The Thunder Bay regional hospital will be put to the test Saturday on how it responds to a full scale disaster.

The Emergency Medical Assistance Team, or EMAT, is in Thunder Bay this weekend for the first time to hold a mock disaster at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre.

EMAT officials say they hope the event doesn't go smoothly.

How would the city react if a disaster struck the city and the hospital became overcrowded and overwhelmed?

If the services were needed, the emergency crew would call EMAT, and the team would come to the city and relieve some of the pressure from the hospital.

It's a mobile team out of Toronto, funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care which will bring all the equipment and resources necessary if a disaster strikes a community in Ontario.

EMAT medical director, Bruce Sawadsky says these mock disasters help the team to practice their procedures.

Over 200 personnel will take part in the exercise put on by Ontario's Emergency Medical Assistance Team. EMAT's goal of the major disaster exercise is to strengthen hospitals across the province in emergency preparedness.

"It's important in this day and age when we know more than ever about the risk of a disaster happening, whether it be accidental or intentional, that hospitals are getting better and better prepared. But, the problem is they don't happen very often. So, to be truly prepared you have to test yourself in a full-scale manner."

Sawadsky says EMAT has been around for the past two and a half years and they've had to deal with only one real disaster so far. Since these practices are staged only twice a year, he hopes people make mistakes during the practice exercise.

"In general, actually, I hope that things don't go smoothly, because these are great at bringing out the weaknesses and then correcting them."

Sawadsky says they'll never get perfect at dealing with disasters, so the more practice they get - the better.