

Hospital set for grand opening

*Hospital Watsonville
Hospital*

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WATSONVILLE — After months of delays, last minute touch-ups and inspections are heralding the opening of Watsonville's new community hospital. This weekend, the new facility at Airport Boulevard celebrates its grand opening, ushering in a new era of local medical care.

"The new facilities will provide a much more comfortable environment to our patients," said Kathleen King, executive director of the Watsonville Community Hospital Foundation. "It will include amenities like an enhanced maternity ward, expanded outpatient services, new MRI facility, and most important in my view, all private rooms."

Doors open to the new facility on April 26. Construction delays, many caused by weather, held up the opening which was originally scheduled for last year.

The move is a work in progress.

Non-clinical offices are already being moved to the new facilities. Preparations are being made for the final week of moving, when all but essential medical equipment will be moved to the new facility in preparation for the moving of the patients, planned for April 26.

"Early in the morning, ambulances will begin moving patients, and trucks will begin moving medical equipment," King said. "We hope to be done before noon."

The ambulances will come from all over Santa Clara County. They will be provided by the same company that works here in Watsonville, but they will come from as many different districts as possible to prevent any community, especially Watsonville's, from being understaffed.

An official grand opening ceremony is scheduled for Sunday, April 19 at 2 p.m., complete with acknowledgments, dedications, flag raising and ribbon cutting. Tours of the new facilities will begin after the ceremony.

At the same time, the sale of the hospital to Community Health Systems Incorporated of Tennessee is still in negotiations, and should not interfere with the move according to hospital officials.