



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information contact:

Ben Roberts
Director, Public Relations & Communications
O: 229-312-5180
C: 229-343-7499
benroberts@phoebehealth.com

Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital Earns Level II Trauma Center Designation

Albany, Ga. – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) has designated Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital (PPMH) as a Level II Trauma Center, the first Georgia hospital to earn that designation in nine years. Surveyors with the department's Office of EMS & Trauma made the recommendation after a recent site visit to PPMH that included a tour of emergency and trauma facilities, a review of Phoebe's trauma protocols and data, and an evaluation of the Phoebe Trauma Program. Phoebe received a letter from DPH Commissioner Dr. Kathleen Toomey formally approving that recommendation.

"This designation will change the way we provide care to southwest Georgia, and it will save lives. It recognizes the extraordinary work of our trauma team and highlights Phoebe's commitment to investing in advanced services that enhance access to life-improving and lifesaving care for everyone in southwest Georgia," said Deb Angerami, PPMH CEO.

PPMH is now just the second Level II Trauma Center in Georgia south of Atlanta. (Piedmont Columbus Regional is the other.) The closest Level I Trauma Centers are in Macon and Savannah. The primary difference between the two levels is that Level I centers must perform additional research that is not required of Level II centers. The level of care and most other requirements are the same.

"This is a fantastic thing. As a Level II Trauma Center, Phoebe can meet a significant need in our region and fill a large void in advanced trauma care in southwest and southcentral Georgia. We will now be able to care for more critically injured patients who may currently be rushed to other trauma centers," said Leon Dent, MD, Phoebe Medical Director for Trauma Services. "In a trauma case, every minute counts, and we don't want patients to have to leave our area. We want to provide the best trauma care for them right here in Albany," Dr. Dent added.

The impact of the Phoebe trauma team's work is already being felt. In 2023, Phoebe activated its trauma team 624 times, an increase of 56% in just two years. And as Phoebe cares for more trauma patients, the survival rate of those patients has increased.

"We have an outstanding team, and it has been a great thrill and honor for me to return to my hometown to help build this program that is providing such vitally important services to this part of Georgia," Dr. Dent said. "We continue to expand our trauma team, hiring more expert trauma specialists. I am exceedingly proud of what our team has already accomplished, and I look forward to what we will accomplish together in the future."

The need for a trauma center in Albany has been discussed among the medical community for decades. The PPMH Board of Directors officially authorized Phoebe to seek Level II Trauma Center designation in 2019. The hospital began hiring trauma team leaders and initiated mandatory data collection late that year and has since implemented stringent protocols and programs that have elevated capabilities throughout the hospital.

"Trauma centers are not money-makers for hospitals. We did not invest in this project to generate revenue. We made these investments because it's the right thing to do for the people of southwest Georgia, and because trauma centers have a halo effect," said Scott Steiner, Phoebe Putney Health System President & CEO. "The best practice initiatives now in place in our Emergency & Trauma Center have led to quality and standardization of care enhancements throughout our health system. That means, every patient benefits, even if they never need trauma care," he added.

The state trauma designation is for one year. Surveyors will return next year for a focused review to determine whether the designation will be granted for an additional two years. The next step in Phoebe's trauma journey is to pursue national verification as a Level II Trauma Center by the American College of Surgeons next year.

"Our work isn't done, but today is a time to celebrate this momentous milestone. We want to congratulate our amazing trauma team and thank the many Phoebe physicians, community providers and team members from departments across our health system who made this achievement a reality," Angerami said.

Phoebe's trauma center will soon have a new home. Construction crews continue working on the new Trauma & Critical Care Tower that will open later this year on Phoebe's main campus. The first floor, that will house the new Emergency & Trauma Center, is scheduled to open in October. Then, the current ER space will be completely overhauled and connected to the new center to create one seamless, advanced center that will be almost three times the size of the current ER.

"The new building will be great, but it is our people, our programs and our commitment to exceptional care and superior service that our patients will notice and that will have the greatest impact on them," Angerami said. "We know our investment in trauma care will help ensure that we live up to the Phoebe vision – to make every life we touch, better."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Attached images include renderings of the new Trauma & Critical Care Tower, as well as photos from today's news conference.





