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U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa

For Further Information Contact:

Public Affairs Officer

U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, Japan

PSC 482 Box 1600

FPO AP 96362-1600

DSN: 643-7294 (from off base, dial 098-911-5111, then 643-7294)

FAX: 643-7531

CELL: 090-6861-4199

EMAIL: nhokipao@med.navy.mil



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Outfitting underway at new USNHO

Brian J. Davis, U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Public Affairs

Outfitting and inspections are currently in progress at the new U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa (USNHO) facility on Camp Foster, and planning is underway to transfer hospital operations to the new facility in March of 2013.

The replacement hospital, located on Camp Foster, will have the same capabilities as the current facility on Camp Lester.

According to Navy Medicine West Detachment officials overseeing the new hospital construction project, the construction stage of the facility is finished, Japan government inspections are complete, and the building is currently being outfitted with equipment and supplies to support healthcare needs. The building and its satellite facilities are also undergoing U. S. government inspections of internal systems, such as the fire alarm and suppression systems to ensure the best possible safe, timely, and quality patient care.

The outfitting process involves a wide range of activities from assembling and placing office furniture to installing and calibrating sophisticated medical equipment.

As with any project of this scale, careful planning is essential, and hospital officials stress that flexibility is the key to a safe and successful transition.

“For example, if we have a critical patient in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or adult Intensive Care Unit (ICU) that can’t be moved on the date the unit is supposed to move, we will reschedule. The NICU, ICU, and all of the critical support functions the patient needs—laboratory, pharmacy, etc.—will remain available at Camp Lester until it’s safe to move our inpatient,” said Capt. Pius A. Aiyelawo, Commanding Officer, U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa.

“The hospital will continue to provide uninterrupted health care leading up to and throughout the transition to the new hospital,” said Aiyelawo.

The 443,000 square foot facility is almost double the size of the previous hospital on Camp Lester. The hospital is constructed to withstand earthquakes, and is situated on high ground outside of the tsunami flood zone. The building boasts modern electrical and medical gas systems, and incorporates a number of energy efficient features such as internal “light courts” that fill the building with natural light.

“This new military treatment facility will represent the leading edge in medical facility design and embody our continued commitment to providing patient and family centered care to those entrusted to our care,” said Aiyelawo.

According to USNHO officials in charge of the transition project, the hospital will publicly announce the dates the move will take place.

“Once all of the physical and administrative requirements to safely set up and deliver care at the new facility are met, we will move in,” said Aiyelawo.

The construction project was part of the implementation plan resulting from the U. S. – Japan Special Action Committee Okinawa (SACO) agreement from 1996, which directed that a new Naval Hospital be built on Camp Foster to replace the facility on Camp Lester. Construction on the new hospital and support facilities began in March 2009.

The design of the new hospital facility also incorporates such features as improved handicap access, more spacious patient care areas, and energy efficient technology. When the entire compound is completed in 2015, the hospital will have additional parking availability with nearly 1,300 spaces.

The USNHO Labor & Delivery Department delivers an average of 100 babies each month, and hospital officials point out that the new Mother Infant Care Center (MICC) will offer an improved birthing experience for expecting mothers and their families. The MICC will have 14 private patient rooms. Each room will incorporate a modern labor and delivery concept where a single room is used for labor, delivery, recovery, and post-partum care. Each Labor, Delivery, Recovery, and Postpartum (LDRP) room also features its own bath/shower room as well as sleeping accommodations for an additional family member.

U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa is the largest overseas military treatment facility in the Navy, serving a beneficiary population of 55,000 active duty personnel, family members, civilian employees, contract personnel, and retirees. The facility also provides referral services for over 189,000 beneficiaries throughout the Western Pacific.

For more news and information about U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa and the upcoming move to Camp Foster, visit www.navy.mil/sites/nhoki or the hospital’s official Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usnho.