



# OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

# DHS NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **King-Harbor Hospital Fails Federal Inspection**

### **Emergency Room and Inpatient Services to Close; Outpatient Services will Remain Open**

LOS ANGELES, Calif., August 10, 2007 – Regulators with the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) today notified Martin Luther King, Jr.-Harbor (King-Harbor) Hospital that it failed to meet several of the conditions required to pass a recent federal survey and retain its Medicare and Medicaid agreements. No further extensions will be granted and the contract will terminate on August 15.

In response to the findings and potential staffing concerns, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS) notified the State Department of Health Services that the hospital needs to close in an emergent, but orderly manner and has requested a voluntary suspension of the hospital license. The department has begun implementation of its plan to close the emergency room and all inpatient services, and begin the orderly transfer of current inpatients to other county hospitals. The Board of Supervisors will meet in special session on Monday to approve those details.

The department has arranged with other health service providers to make the transition as seamless as possible:

All 911 Ambulances are being redirected to one of nine surrounding hospitals following new boundaries recently redrawn in cooperation with the county's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agency and ambulance providers.

Inpatient services will be provided at two other county hospitals (Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Hospital) and at private hospitals under contract with the County to replace the inpatient beds at King-Harbor.

King-Harbor will continue to offer ambulatory care services, including clinics for diabetes and high blood pressure and other medical conditions, and non-emergency Urgent Care. Urgent Care services will operate 16 hours a day, seven days a week. Ambulances will remain on the site to transfer walk-in patients with emergency-level needs to a full-service hospital.

“We worked day and night to reform the hospital while keeping it open, and in the end the risk was worth the effort because the need is so great,” said DHS director and chief medical officer

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Bruce Chernof, M.D. “The decision is a blow to the community, but the department will not operate a hospital that cannot meet national standards. We must now move forward and look to other options to reopen a hospital in the future.”

Chernof said the department is committed to reopening King-Harbor as a full-service hospital as soon as possible, and is working to identify potential private operators, or options for County operation under a reconfigured model. Once the transfer of patients is completed, department officials expect to seek voluntary suspension of the hospital’s license, enabling an operator to more easily open a hospital on the site in the future.

“I’m proud of this hospital and the good care we provided to thousands of patients under unimaginable pressures and the media spotlight,” said King-Harbor chief executive officer Antonette Smith Epps. “It’s a sad day for the community, for the dedicated hospital supporters, and for all who worked so hard to keep it open, and they have my gratitude.”

While striving to improve King-Harbor operations, DHS developed a contingency plan in the event that it had to close. Meetings were held with all affected hospitals, agencies, regulators, unions and contractors to prepare to handle the complex logistics involved in the changes.

Chernof said the department appreciates the cooperation and diligence of all those who are working to maintain high quality medical services during a difficult time.