



Caring For Each Other During Crisis

LeConte Medical Center helps patients, emergency responders and the community during and after area wildfires

On the night of Monday, Nov. 28, wildfires which had simmered in various areas of the Smoky Mountains were stoked by near hurricane force winds and came to “full boil,” burning through surrounding dry forests and heading for the communities of Wear’s Valley, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg with incredible speed. As fires worsened, an evacuation of the area was announced.

In anticipation of emergency medical needs, LeConte Medical Center implemented the hospital’s disaster plan and included assessing and planning resources for staffing, supplies and equipment, and communications emergency responders. Covenant Health, LeConte’s parent organization, provided additional resources for disaster preparedness and operations.

With an ongoing commitment to putting the patient first, LeConte immediately began treating patients with fire-related conditions. By Dec. 6, one week after the fires had blazed out of control, LeConte Medical Center had cared for 176 fire-related patients.

LeConte Medical Center also collaborated with organizations such as the Tennessee State Emergency Operations response team during the crisis. The team set up a mobile command center adjacent to the hospital, which facilitated communications between the organizations.

LeConte Medical Center also provided accommodations and food for local and state emergency responders and fire crews from throughout the United States. In addition to onsite support for emergency responders, the hospital prepared food and supplies and dispatched them to rescue units throughout the county.

The LeConte Medical Center Thrift Shop, operated by hospital volunteers, opened its doors to receive extra donations and to help those affected by the fires. Within the first week more than 250 care packages with toiletries, essential items and size-specific clothing were distributed to those in need. Administrators from LeConte Medical Center and Covenant Health have expressed gratitude to LeConte employees, physicians and volunteers, who worked tirelessly to provide care to the surrounding communities.

Several LeConte employees lost their homes in the fires, yet continued caring for others despite their own personal losses. Other words of gratitude have come from the emergency responders and operations teams, who have thanked LeConte Medical Center for food, housing and support as the emergency teams accomplished their difficult tasks.

Jenny Hanson, LeConte’s president and chief administrative officer, served as incident commander of the hospital’s command center during the week following Nov. 28. “I think God has placed each of us here for this specific purpose, and used the gifts and talents of our team to best meet the needs of our patients, first responders and the community at large,” she said. “I thank each and every member of the LeConte family for unwavering dedication, not only to our patients and each other, but also to the community. My thoughts and prayers also continue to be with those who have lost so much during this tragedy.”

Covenant Health’s executive leadership team also expressed thanks to LeConte Medical Center. “In times of crisis, the importance of what we do every day in health care is highlighted even more. The Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge communities are dealing with incredible loss, yet LeConte Medical Center’s staff is there, caring for patients even while many of the Center’s employees are facing personal loss and concerns. We recognize the employees and medical staff of LeConte Medical Center for their incredible commitment to caring for the community. We are proud to be part of this dedicated team.” LeConte and Covenant Health are also grateful to individuals and organizations who have given financial donations to help LeConte employees and the hospital, including the Tennessee Hospital Association, Mountain States Health Alliance in Johnson City, and others.