

UTMB Health Level 1 Trauma Center



The trauma center at the University of Texas Medical Branch is one of the largest and most technologically sophisticated emergency care facilities in the world.

Designated a Level 1 trauma center, it serves as the lead trauma facility for a nine-county region of southeast Texas. It is the only Level 1 trauma center in the region that is also a Level 1 burn center.

In the United States, trauma centers are ranked according to standards established by the American College of Surgeons, from Level 1 (comprehensive service) to Level 3 (limited-care). The different levels refer to the kinds of resources available in a trauma center and the number of patients admitted annually.

UTMB's trauma center offers the full range of every medical and surgical specialty 24/7, 365 days a year. It can respond to diverse medical needs, such as mass casualties, multiple traumas, closed-head injury, severe burns, petroleum industry accidents, hazardous material exposure, heart attacks and a variety of minor complaints that are treated simultaneously.

Timeline

- 1992: Dedication
- January 1999: Certified as Level 1
- Sept. 13, 2008: Closed as a result of Hurricane Ike
- August 2009: Reopened
- 2010: Quality review by American College of Surgeons
- March 2011: Recertified as Level 1

Data

- Visits: 40,000 patients annually, 100 patients daily
- Admissions: 20-25 daily
- Average service delivery time: Less than 10 minutes

Facility Facts

- 90,000 square feet
- Number of trauma bays: 7
- Patient rooms: 30
- Specialty care rooms: 10
- Minor emergency area rooms: 5-7
- Treatment overflow rooms: 9
- Number of helipads: 2
- State-of-the-art decontamination areas
- Fixed-air isolation room



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Level 1 Requirements

A Level 1 trauma center provides the highest level of surgical care to trauma patients. Being treated at a Level 1 trauma center increases a seriously injured patient's chances of survival by an estimated 20 to 25 percent. It has a full range of specialists and equipment available 24 hours a day and admits a minimum required annual volume of severely injured patients.

At a Level 1 trauma center, a team of physicians, surgeons, nurses, X-ray technicians and other health professionals is available 24 hours a day. There is always a trauma surgeon, a neurosurgeon, a respiratory therapist and other designated staff physically present on the UTMB campus. A typical UTMB trauma team consists of a physician faculty member, three residents and emergency room nurses. One trauma team is always on call at any given time.

Additionally, the Level 1 trauma center has an education program, preventive and outreach programs, a program of research, is a leader in trauma education and injury prevention, and is a referral resource for communities in nearby regions.

The Level 1 designation is granted by the Texas Department of State Health Services. The American College of Surgeons, on behalf TDSHS, makes the actual quality review. The Level 1 designation is valid for three years.

Background

In 2008, just prior to Hurricane Ike, the National Trauma Data Bank ranked UTMB's trauma center No. 1 in survival rate among all Level 1 trauma centers in the United States.

When Hurricane Ike closed the UTMB trauma center for nearly one year, mainland and Houston emergency rooms were overburdened and access to all types of medical care diminished.

The Houston region, with about 6 million people, was underserved by Level 1 trauma centers even before Hurricane Ike. For every 1 million people, there should be one Level 1 trauma center, the American College of Surgeons has said. With UTMB, the Houston/Galveston area now has three.

The two Level 1 trauma centers in Houston are Memorial Hermann and Ben Taub General. Only Memorial Hermann and UTMB have helicopter pads to receive patients arriving by air ambulances.

Long Road to Recovery

UTMB's trauma center is more than 30 feet above sea level and was beyond the level of Hurricane Ike's storm surge. However, a trauma center requires a blood bank, sterile processing equipment and an inpatient pharmacy, all of which were heavily damaged by the storm.

Once the required services to support the trauma center were back on-line, UTMB was able to open its emergency room doors in August 2009, but without its Level 1 designation.

To regain Level 1 designation as specified by the American College of Surgeons, UTMB had to document that it was again providing the research support, educational programs and 24-hour availability of specialty care required of such trauma centers, and collect that data for 12 months.