

Woman's Hospital Prepared for Storms

East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana

Baton Rouge, LA – As Hurricane Isaac's strongest winds and rains moved inland and into the Louisiana capitol city of Baton Rouge, Woman's Hospital was ready. When the power started flickering at the hospital's new campus, administrators made the choice to go "off the grid" for their energy supply.

They switched to generators to power electronic medical monitoring devices, other technologies, and general operations. The staff had babies to deliver, surgeries to perform, and other female patients to care for. The hospital needed steady, reliable power – and three new generators supplied it.

Funded in part by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the generators were part of a state-managed project called "The 5 percent Initiative." It funded the purchase and installation of generators at state-owned facilities and other critical sites like medical centers. Woman's Hospital, a regional, nonprofit medical center that opened in 1968, is the designated Emergency Disaster Preparedness Hospital for pregnant women and babies,

Woman's Hospital Senior Vice President Stan Shelton learned of the generator initiative in the midst of the hospital's construction and expansion project in 2010. As designs were developing, hospital administrators focused on ensuring the building's infrastructure would be well-prepared for any crisis or natural disaster in storm-prone Louisiana. During Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Woman's Hospital lost power for four hours and then bounced back to handle more than 100 neonatal evacuations from New Orleans. During Hurricane Gustav in 2008, Woman's electrical transmission lines failed, and a generator arrived from Georgia just 15 minutes before the neonatal ward would have been evacuated.

Shelton and other Woman's staff drafted their application and worked closely with numerous local elected officials. "At every point along the way, we felt like they were trying to make us successful," Shelton said.

At the end of 2010, Shelton and other Woman's officials got the good news: FEMA would provide nearly \$4 million for the 75 percent Federal share of the \$5.3 million project.

The three generators are capable of operating all critical hospital services. Anchored to the floor to prevent flotation, collapse, or lateral movement, they are housed on the second floor of the complex's energy plant. Their double-walled, 25,000-gallon fuel tank is elevated next to the plant, which itself is built a foot above the floodplain level.

During Hurricane Isaac, the generators ran for several hours, allowing patients to get the care they needed. With the new generators, Woman's Hospital will be able to power through the next big storm.