

## Mitigation Project Equips Hospital in Handling Day-to-Day Operations during Power Outages

**PENSACOLA, FL.** – Pensacola was hit hard after Hurricane Ivan barreled down on the Gulf Coast in September 2004 when the storm knocked out Sacred Heart Hospital’s electricity.

The hospital was forced to rely on emergency generators, but their capacity was not sufficient to supply the entire building with air conditioning. The hospital remained functional but at reduced capacity.

Sacred Heart, one of the nation’s top cardiovascular hospitals, is a 566-bed critical facility that includes the region’s only Children’s Hospital, a Level II Trauma Center, a Cancer Center affiliated with MD Anderson Cancer Network and a Heart and Vascular Institute that offers life support systems.

“We were able to maintain all the hospital’s essential functions during the storm. We did emergency surgery and delivered babies, but the backup generators were not big enough to cool the entire hospital.” said Mike Burke, public relations manager. “The rising temperature and humidity made the floors very slippery. Elective surgery had to be postponed. There were concerns that our computer system would overheat. Our neo-natal intensive care unit was also at risk. Fans had to be brought in.”

According to Burke, the hospital was in a critical state for about 36 to 48 hours before full power was restored. The cellular communication system was also challenged.

“Hurricane Ivan highlighted some areas of potential risks,” said Becky Washler, Sacred Heart Hospital’s senior planner. “We realized that we needed more emergency generators to keep other areas of the facility fully operational, not only critical care areas and life safety equipment. Having additional patient areas fully operational during an outage will allow the hospital to better respond to community medical needs during a disaster.”

Administered by the Florida Division of Emergency Management, Sacred Heart Hospital received two grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

With the first grant, a two-fixed and fully protected 2,000 KW back-up emergency generator set was installed. This generator system provides back-up electrical power for life safety, medical equipment and air-conditioning in critical patient care areas during a power outage.

Total project cost was \$2,381,617.36. Federal share was \$1,190,808.68 (50 percent) and local was \$1,190,808.68.

Total project cost was \$1,699,730. Federal share was \$908,009 (53.4 percent) and local share was \$791,721 (46.6 percent). All installations complied with Florida building codes and all materials were certified to meet wind and impact standards



The hospital received a grant to purchase and install this 2MW generator. The generator provides additional power so that non-critical patient care areas of the hospital can be used and not evacuated during a power outage. **Photo courtesy of Florida Division of Emergency Management**



Although the project's benefits have yet to be tested, the hospital is prepared. "We haven't had a power outage since the generators were installed. However, we are more than ready to handle the situation should it occur," said Washler.

A hospital is a community's life support system, it is key that it is equipped with sufficient emergency power to keep it fully operational during outages, particularly during and after a disaster. As sustaining life is the primary objective, a critical facility should always be able to keep vital equipment running and fully-operational for the workforce, patients and patrons.

For additional information, visit:

- [www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1424214818421-60725708b37ee7c1dd72a8fc84a8e498/FEMAP-1019\\_Final\\_02-06-2015.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1424214818421-60725708b37ee7c1dd72a8fc84a8e498/FEMAP-1019_Final_02-06-2015.pdf)
- <https://www.sacred-heart.org/>



The masonry building provides shelter for the 2 MW generator. **Photo courtesy of Florida Division of Emergency Management**