

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Wairau Hospital building refurbishment underway

It's more important than ever to save the Emergency Department at Wairau Hospital for emergencies as earthquake-strengthening work gets underway on the Arthur Wicks building where it is based.

The ED will remain open through the strengthening work, which started on Wednesday and is expected to continue for nine months.

Patrick Ng, NMDHB General Manager - IT & Infrastructure, says a lot of planning has gone into minimizing the disruption to the public and staff, but there will be additional traffic noise and possibly short delays as construction vehicles move in and out of the site.

It will be best for patients and staff if only those who need to be in the vicinity are there, he says.

A billboard will be put up outside the ED entrance reminding people that the department is for emergencies only and encouraging people to go to another health provider if it's not an emergency.

Doctor Andrew Morgan, Wairau Hospital clinical head of emergency, says people should always choose the most appropriate health professional for their condition and only go to the ED when they need emergency care, but this will be especially important while construction workers are busy in the area.

People in Marlborough go to ED more often and for less serious reasons than people in most other parts of the country. Health leaders have been working to get the message out to the Marlborough public that ED is for emergencies only, and encourage them to see their GP or the urgent after-hours GP first.

Dr Morgan says some people are taking the message on board, but the number of people turning up at ED with conditions that should have been seen by a GP or in some cases a pharmacist remains too high.

Patrick Ng says the earthquake-strengthening project involves internal and external seismic strengthening work and an office fit-out on the upper floor of the Arthur Wicks building.

Approximately 30 non-clinical staff from the upper level have been relocated to other buildings on the hospital campus. This includes staff from various departments, such as administration, medical administration, HR and nurse educators.

There will be an impact on staff working in the Emergency Department and High Dependency Unit and a disruption management plan has been put together by a DHB user group, which includes

representatives from affected staff, together with Scotts construction, who are the chosen contractor for the work.

“In the interests of public safety we remind people to follow all the signage and instructions if they find themselves near the construction site.”

Patrick Ng says that once the work is completed the building will be at 100 percent of the national building standard.

“In addition to the strengthening work, we are taking the opportunity to completely re-fit the first floor of the building as a comfortable, modern and open plan working space for our staff,” he says.

Side Box

Where Should I Be?

Healthline: Ring 0800 611 116 for advice from a registered nurse.

Pharmacists: For advice, a range of pharmacy-only medicines, emergency supplies of on-going prescription medicines and first aid.

Your GP: Most GP clinics have some appointments available for acute cases or you can get advice from the Practice Nurse. This is the place for your day-to-day health needs.

Marlborough Urgent GP After Hours clinic: The clinic is for health needs that arise out of GP working hours. It is in the hospital grounds off Hospital Rd, Blenheim, and is open from 6pm to 10pm on weekdays and 8am to 10pm on weekends and public holidays.

If there is a medical emergency call 111 or go to the Emergency Department at Wairau Hospital

Ends

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