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## Officials: Tennessee trauma centers in need of funding

Tuesday, Feb 13, 2007 - 12:00 AM

**Bristol Herald Courier Staff Reports**  
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Tennessee's network of trauma centers is at a "critical crossroads" and needs funding, officials said Monday.

Trauma centers are different from emergency rooms and require specialized physicians and nurses, equipment and space 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Tennessee implemented a trauma-care system in 1988. By 2002, there were 13 trauma centers across the state.

Today, there are 10. Holston Valley Medical Center in Kingsport and Bristol Regional Medical Center both have trauma centers.

Rising costs have forced many of the centers to close, Dr. Julie Dunn, chairwoman of the state Trauma Care Advisory Council, said Monday in a news release.

"The Tennessee trauma system is at risk," Dunn said.

Over the next few weeks, she said the group will educate legislators and the governor on the issue.

Nationwide, 32 trauma centers have closed in the last 18 months.

Because of the needed special equipment and staff, trauma centers are much more expensive to operate than other hospital services. Many patients have no insurance.

In 2005, the total uncompensated trauma costs for Tennessee Level I trauma centers was \$37.6 million, according to the release.

About 18,000 patients receive care annually in Tennessee trauma centers. Most patients who use the center are the victims of vehicle crashes.

Trauma is the No. 1 cause of death for people from birth to age 45 in the United States.





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