

# WDEF News 12

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## State Trauma Centers

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Car crashes... Gunshot wounds... A-T-V mishaps...

Just a few reasons trauma centers in Tennessee exist.

<Dr. Michael Carr:>

"Some of those injuries are fatal. We see broken necks, children who are paralyzed riding on atv's, we also see injuries to the internal organs."

Erlanger Health System operates one of six top-tier trauma centers in Tennessee...

Places equipped with specialists and technology to help the most seriously injured.

<Dr. Philip Smith:>

"The emergency room covers a much wider gamut of cases."

Doctors estimate the "focused" care trauma centers provide reduces death from injuries by 12 to 30-percent every year.

But that care comes at an expense.

Erlanger racked up 17-million dollars in uncompensated care last year...

And incurred another 14-million dollar expense to keep the trauma center open 24/7.

<Dr. Michael Carr:>

"Although there is a system for trauma care in Tennessee, it's not funded. So each of the hospitals accepts that burden."

Fearing the expense may one day overshadow the benefit...

Level-one trauma centers across Tennessee issue a red alert, calling on the state to start pitching-in.

<Dr. Philip Smith:>

"Our helicopters range from north georgia and northern alabama to western north carolina up to the I-40 line up to knoxville and nashville and a lot of the patients come in without insurance."

Doctors say if Erlanger stopped offering trauma care... Seriously injured people would be flown to Nashville or Knoxville, wasting valuable time.

Those not able to make the trip, would receive care from a standard emergency room.

<Dr. Michael Carr:>

"Things don't go as fast things don't go as smoothly.

In the last 18 months, 32 trauma centers across the country have closed.

Non-critical patients benefit from trauma centers.

High-tech equipment purchased for trauma cases, like the latest C-T scanner, ends up in use to find problems in stroke and heart disease patients.

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