

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Juan Luis Hospital Officials Delay Emergency Room Move To Cardiac Center

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ST. CROIX -- Juan F. Luis Hospital officials have delayed the June 14 move of the hospital's emergency department from its current sewage-burdened location to the Cardiac Center, giving multiple reasons for the delay, but no new relocation date.

That's according to J.F.L. Acting CEO Richard Evangelista, who announced the delay on the radio show Straight Talk with Holland Redfield on Tuesday.

"We are delaying the temporary transition of our emergency services department at this time. In order for us to move, we need to ensure that we have psychiatric nurses on staff to manage the psychiatric hold unit adjacent to the existing emergency department, and

we have seven licenses currently before the nurse licensure board," Mr. Evangelista said, according to a release JFL issued late Tuesday. "Additionally, we still have some infrastructure work that needs to be completed to prepare for the transition." The hospital said while a new move date had yet to be established, the public will be notified "well in advance of the move."

JFL said the hospital continues to provide emergency department services at the current location, and that measures implemented to mitigate the sewage and drainage problems, including portable potties stationed just outside the emergency room, were under control.

But nurses and other emergency room employees who spoke with The Consortium recently, described a department that was in total disarray, with patients sometimes waiting almost an entire day before being seen. "If someone comes here with cardiac arrest, we would have to attend to them on the floor in the waiting room," said one emergency room nurse, speaking on the condition of anonymity. Another employee said even the pending location, the Cardiac Center, is not nearly adequate to house patients, as beds are even more limited than the current location.

Yet with all the problems, Mr. Evangelista said that ensuring adequate care for all patients remains the facility's main priority. "Quality healthcare and patient safety are our top priorities," he said. "At the end of the day, we want to ensure that when we do transition to the VICC, our ED is ready and everyone will receive the quality of care that they are so deserving of here in the Virgin Islands."