

# Older Enloe building is strengthened to meet quake rules

Larry Mitchell, Chico Enterprise-Record, 7-6-10

CHICO -- While it's the newest, the Century Project is hardly Enloe Medical Center's first expansion.

The new tower, surgery center, emergency department and other elements being put in place now are actually the hospital's seventh expansion, said Bill Seguine, Enloe's director of facilities.

Seven separate buildings make up Enloe's facility on The Esplanade, he said. The buildings are connected, of course, to make one hospital.

These seven buildings were constructed at various times and they are of varying strength.

Strength is an issue because of state rules about hospitals and earthquake safety.

After the 1994 Northridge earthquake heavily damaged hospitals in Southern California, the state Legislature passed Senate Bill 1953, which required hospital buildings to be strengthened.

The idea, Seguine said, is that if a massive earthquake hit nearby, a hospital should be left standing and ready to care for the injured.

Enloe's older buildings along The Esplanade cannot be upgraded, he said. They are suitable for offices, clinics or out-patient centers. But they can't be used for critical functions, such as pharmacy, radiology or emergency medicine.

Along Sixth Avenue, just east of the new tower, is a building constructed in 1964 that can be and is being upgraded. It now houses Enloe's surgery and radiology departments.

Work on upgrading it is three-quarters done, Seguine said.

"This building was a precast tilt-up," he said. That means it was made with concrete panels that were constructed somewhere else, brought to the site and set in place.

"This type of building is not stable enough under the new codes," he said. "We have engineered a way to stiffen the building enough so it can continue to be used until 2030."

Why only until 2030?

Even with the upgrade now being done, this building will not meet the standards of SB1953. But because hospital construction is so expensive, the state has allowed hospitals to gradually move toward the standards, Seguine said.

In 2030, Enloe will be expected to put up something that does meet the standard.

Seguine said the building is being strengthened by surrounding it with four 18-inch-thick concrete walls.

"That will enable it to survive a big quake," he said.

Three of these walls have been put in place. The fourth must wait until the new surgery center (an element of the Century Project) is built and the operating rooms can be moved there.

The older building will continue to be a radiology center.

The reconstruction has made it a good time for Enloe to buy and move in some long-desired advanced radiology equipment.

A new CT scanner will be moved into the building at the end of this month. A new open MRI will be installed in early August. And new equipment for two X-ray rooms will come later, he said.

All of this will result in better images, Seguire said.