

# In the Q: Flood of 2016: Preparation, Evacuation and Cooperation in the MedQuarter



**Phil Wasta**  
MedQuarter  
Executive Director

Now that the Cedar River's second highest crest in our City's history is behind us, it is encouraging to see the bulk of the impacted businesses and districts getting back on their feet. While the majority of the MedQuarter Regional Medical

District did not fall in the floodplain, the evacuation area significantly affected access and traffic flow during those tense days in September. Along with many others in the City, the MedQuarter prepared and cooperated to provide support, care and safety for the community.



## PREPARATION

Several businesses in the MedQuarter prepared for a repeat of the 2008 flood levels. Family Medicine Specialists, at the corner of 5th Street and 8th Avenue SE, initially planned to vacate just their lower level however, when the evacuation notice was put out on September 25, their plan shifted to evacuation. Mercy Medical Center prepared by surrounding their Emergency Room and 8th Avenue entrance with huge industrial sandbags and armed their main campus with pumps should the water force its way through the sewer as it did in 2008. At the northern end of the District, UnityPoint – St. Luke's Hospital needed to find alternate parking for 360 employee vehicles due to the closure of their North Parking Structure adjacent to Cedar Lake.

## EVACUATION

Due to the evacuation area order, and a loaded patient schedule, Family Medicine Specialists needed to relocate temporarily. We connected them with owners of the 411 10th Street Medical Building who

provided two vacant office suites. This allowed Family Medicine Specialists to see patients starting on Monday, September 26th. While Mercy Medical Center was still open for business throughout the evacuation period, the disruption to access was significant. To assist patients and visitors into the hospital and their multiple clinics, Mercy posted employees at key intersections to help navigate the closures.



(continued on next page)

## In the Q: Flood of 2016: Preparation, Evacuation and Cooperation in the MedQuarter (Cont.)

### COOPERATION

Although the number of businesses impacted in the MedQuarter were few, their needs were significant. Many people collaborated to make sure that the negative impact to each business was minimal. During all of this, those in the MedQuarter never forgot that there was a broader community that had needs as well. We fielded many offers from people asking how they could help. Even those who were busy preparing and evacuating within the MedQuarter helped others in the community while working to protect themselves. One such story bears witness to this great spirit of cooperation:

*Message from Liz Mathis, Four Oaks – Friday, September 30*

*The 2016 flood evacuation in Cedar Rapids included the Geneva Tower apartment complex. There are more than 170 residents who live in Geneva Tower who are in poverty, have complex medical needs and disabilities. The residents range from families to the elderly. The Affordable Housing Network,*

*Inc. (AHNI), a Four Oaks affiliate, manages Geneva Tower. AHNI and Four Oaks reached out to Melissa Cullum, Mercy Medical Center, and Aimee Traugh, UnityPoint – St. Luke’s, for help with some of our most medically fragile residents. The two hospitals immediately responded with offers to temporarily house 12 Geneva Tower residents in hotels and support us. Mercy Medical Center also provided sheet sets for 50 of our residents who were sleeping on borrowed beds in makeshift shelters at the community rooms at Cedar Valley and Hawthorne Hills apartments. We are grateful for the support our local hospitals demonstrated at a time of great need for our residents.*

*Liz Mathis  
Community Engagement Director  
Four Oaks, AHNI, Jane Boyd Community House*

This is just one of many stories that resemble the incredible cooperation offered and rendered by businesses and individuals throughout Cedar Rapids. These efforts kept our city and its residents safe from harm. It is this kind of compassion that makes me proud to be a Cedar Rapidian, and equally as proud to represent the MedQuarter Regional Medical District.