

TO MEDIA:

CONTACT PERSON: Robin Jennings

Director, Communications

Excelsa Health

724-837-1781 TEL

724-516-4483 CELL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**EXCELA HEALTH EXPANDING EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT
AT WESTMORELAND HOSPITAL**

GREENSBURG, PA, March 26, 2010 ... Excelsa Health's long anticipated expansion of the Westmoreland Hospital Emergency Department gets under way March 29. The project, expected to take nine months, includes a 3,400-square-foot building addition, and renovation of another 3,700 square feet. When complete, the department will be equipped better to handle 60,000 visits annually.

Among the improvements, plans call for the addition of eight exam rooms for a total of 41 and the placement of a 16-slice CT scanner in the department to enhance diagnostic testing. The waiting and registration areas also will be enlarged.

Included in the project is a new 29-space patient parking lot on the corner of West Pittsburgh Street and South Washington Avenue.

"Emergency departments are busy places," said Ron Ott, president, Westmoreland Hospital. "Last year alone we saw more than 122,000 patients come through our emergency departments across the health system. We recognize emergency care is often a gateway to continuing care and we are continually striving to improve that service."

Since 2005, Excelsa Health has upgraded the emergency departments at Latrobe Hospital and Frick Hospital. Once Westmoreland's expansion is complete, Excelsa Health will have invested in excess of \$15 million in emergency facilities and equipment.

The recent opening of an urgent care center at Excelsa Health's Jeannette campus is another opportunity to improve access to care. Individuals who may have utilized Westmoreland's emergency department for non-life threatening conditions now have another option less than four miles away. "The timing of our emergency department expansion dovetails with the opening of QuikCare at Jeannette," added Ott. "We are hopeful patients will see the benefit of urgent care as a time saving alternative to the emergency visit when their family physician is unavailable. Our emergency departments care for patients in the order of severity, which means patients who don't have a life-threatening condition may wait much longer than those patients with a serious illness or injury. The construction provides another opportunity to educate our patients on how to choose a level of care that best meets their need."

Patients also may check Excelsa Health's web site, www.excelahealth.org, for posted wait times in each hospital's emergency department. Information regarding QuikCare is also available there as well.

Throughout the Westmoreland construction period, added parking lot patrol and temporary signage will help with the flow of traffic. The project will be completed in phases to minimize disruption to patients, staff and visitors; however, the entrance to the department will be restricted and monitored to move emergency personnel and walk-in traffic efficiently and safely to and from care.

Individuals who may have used the emergency department entrance to access services elsewhere in the hospital are asked to use either the Main Entrance on Pittsburgh Street or the Center for Cardiovascular Medicine entrance on Shearer Street opposite the parking garage.