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## Governor Phil Murphy



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# Press Pool Coverage: Governor Murphy Tours Field Medical Station at Meadowlands Exposition Center

04/2/2020

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Gov. Phil Murphy and U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez spent about 20 minutes Thursday touring the state's first field hospital in response to the coronavirus and thanked the state troopers and Army Corps of Engineers for their speedy work that they said would save lives.

The 250-bed hospital at the Meadowlands Exposition Center should be ready to take non-COVID-19 patients Monday, said Col. Patrick Callahan, superintendent of the State Police. COVID-19 is the disease caused by the coronavirus.

Murphy called it an "extraordinary effort" to build the hospital.

"Of course, this is only the end of the beginning as opposed to the beginning of the end," Murphy said to a room of workers. "God bless you all and thank you for everything you've done to get this going."

Menendez, who led the effort to get the hospital as well as two others under construction, in Edison and Atlantic City, told the workers, "we're hopefully going to save lives."

The field hospital will serve as a "step-down" facility for patients that would otherwise go to area hospitals to alleviate pressure on them. However, Callahan said the field hospital could be ramped up for intensive care use.

"It's rudimentary," Callahan said, "but the care will be the same as every hospital in the state of New Jersey."

Rows of one-bed units are set up in blocks inside the exposition center. The beds look similar to Army cots and each has a white curtain for privacy. Murphy, looking inside one of the units, said it looks like a "very basic setup." Workers also outfitted the center with a temporary pharmacy, showers, sinks, toilets, nurse's station and break room for health care workers.

Major Gen. Jeffrey Milhorn, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' North Atlantic Division, called the field hospital a "simple solution to a complex situation."

The Army Corps worked with the State Police to build the hospital over the last seven or eight days, Callahan said. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Guard and health officials also worked on the hospital to ensure it met federal specifications. Millhorn gave much of the credit for the build-out of the hospital to State Troopers.

"We're just enablers," Millhorn said. "We want to enable you to move fastest by providing the ICU capability and acute care in the existing hospital footprints."

The other two field hospitals should be ready to open soon, Callahan said, though he did not have firm dates. A fourth hospital that was planned to open in Monmouth County was instead folded into the project under construction in Edison and will hold 500 beds, he said.

"We expand capacity and we pray every day that we don't need it," Menendez said.

On his way out of the tour, Murphy praised Millhorn and his team.

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“At some point when I can I’m going to give you a hug, but I can’t do that today,” Murphy said.

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