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Ambulances began moving patients into the new Baptist Memorial Hospital-North Mississippi at 5 a.m. and were finished by 10:20 a.m., in Oxford, Miss. on Saturday, November 25, 2017.

Baptist, Priority partnership seeing positive results in young relationship

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Less than three months after Baptist Memorial Health Care Corp. contracted with Priority Ambulance to provide patient transport service and emergency ambulance service to Oxford and Lafayette County residents, officials say the transition has been a relatively smooth one.

Eric Messer, vice president of operations for Priority, said the full transition happened in early October and since then Priority has hired new staff and provided pay raises for existing ambulance workers who transitioned over from Baptist.

“We added some trucks to the system,” he said last week at the Oxford Board of Aldermen meeting. “And purchased some golf carts to help move around the Grove at Ole Miss.”

Messer said response times for ambulance runs inside the city limits are now 7 minutes and 9 minutes in the county.

“The national average is 12 minutes,” he said. “The guys have done a phenomenal job. We have much work to do yet, but continue to strive to give the best service possible.”

Priority is now managing ambulance services throughout the Baptist Memorial Health system, said Oxford's BMH-NM Administrator and CEO Bill Henning.

"Everything is still being run under the Baptist system," Henning said. "We're still responsible for the service. Everything we did in the past, Priority is doing now under a partnership agreement. Priority brings experience as a large national company that we didn't have, particularly in dispatching."

Priority Ambulance provides emergency and non-emergency medical transport services in eight states.

Company partners include Shoals Ambulance in Alabama; Maricopa Ambulance in Arizona; Puckett EMS in Georgia and southeast Tennessee; Central EMS in Georgia; Seals Ambulance in Indiana; Kunkel Ambulance in upstate New York; Trans Am Ambulance in western New York and northwestern Pennsylvania; Medshore Ambulance in South Carolina; and Priority Ambulance in East Tennessee, and more recently, in West Tennessee and Mississippi under the Baptist brand.

Shortly after the transition, Priority helped with moving patients from the previous BMH-NM facility in Oxford to the new hospital when it opened in November.

"It was seamless," Messer said. "We planned to start at 5 a.m. and be done by 1 p.m. We were done by about 10 a.m. The skills of the guys here are fantastic."

Messer said future plans include adding a station to the west side of Oxford.