

Las Vegas hospital on standby to treat President Biden during COVID-19 diagnosis

by Cristen Drummond

Wed, July 17th 2024 at 7:12 PM

Updated Wed, July 17th 2024 at 7:28 PM



Law enforcement and medical teams gathered outside the University Medical Center trauma room entrance on Wellness Way in case the President of the United States arrived after he canceled an appearance at the Unidos US Convention in Las Vegas due to testing positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, July 17, 2024. (KSNV)

TOPICS:

[President Biden](#)[COVID-19](#)[Las Vegas](#)[University Medical Center](#)[Van Houweling](#)[Medical treatment](#)[Air Force One](#)[Unidos US](#)

LAS VEGAS (KSNV) — A Las Vegas hospital was on standby after being alerted about a possible medical issue with President Joe Biden Wednesday afternoon while he was visiting Southern Nevada.

Law enforcement and medical teams gathered outside the University Medical Center trauma room entrance on Wellness Way in case the President of the United States arrived after he canceled an appearance at the Unidos US Convention in Las Vegas due to [testing positive for COVID-19](#). Unidos US President and CEO Janet Murguía made the announcement to attendees who were waiting to hear the president speak.

President Biden did not seek medical treatment at the hospital but instead went to the airport and departed Las Vegas on Air Force One to self-isolate at his home in Delaware.

"I'm happy that commander-in-chief is safe and doing well," Mason Van Houweling, CEO of UMC, said. "We prepare the perimeter set, lots of security measures, lots of training with our staff."

Due to the hospital being the only Level 1 Trauma Center in Nevada, that's where the president will go during a medical emergency.

Van Houweling said the hospital was alerted around 2:15 p.m. about a possible medical issue with the president.

"Didn't have the details around that, but we were ready and stood ready to be able to address any needs that the president needed," Van Houweling said.

RELATED [|News 3 was with President Biden's press pool when he tested positive for COVID](#)

He said the hospital team immediately took action while working with local and state law enforcement to secure the perimeter and also protect patients inside the building along with the president, in case he was brought to the medical center.

"We stood ready," Van Houweling said. "We knew we were dealing with more of a medical issue - definitely trauma and any accidents were off the table. So again, we shifted gears to be able to address a medical need here at UMC."

Van Houweling credits the team for acting swiftly, from setting up an incident command center to adjusting how to treat President Biden.

"Typically, with traumas, you've got surgeons and CTS and X-rays and operating rooms," Van Houweling said. "We knew that this was going to be more of a medical environment. So (having) your typical imaging and your lab procedures and other things that would be more intense on a medical side versus a trauma. So, we adjusted our team based off the information that we received early on."

Van Houweling said the hospital remained in communication with President Biden's security team about the evolving incident. Law enforcement and staff did not start to clear the area outside trauma and inside the hospital until after Air Force One departed Las Vegas.

"We're extremely proud of how we responded," Van Houweling said. "We opened up our incident command center today. Tested that system. That worked well. So again, a great report from a non-event today that could have been potentially a major event."