

**Traffic Engineering and Safety Systems Branch Decision Concerning Hospital Signing:  
Highway Signing Approved for Hospital Trauma Centers  
Highway Signing Not Approved for Specialty Medical Treatment Centers**

Since highway signing is intended to provide only necessary guidance information for the everyday motorist, the messages on highway signs for hospitals should be limited to *Hospital* (or the specific name of the hospital if approved by NCDOT and paid for by the hospital) and *Trauma Center*, if the facility is qualified as such.

The *Trauma Center* message should be installed below the hospital sign or included within the hospital sign below the hospital message. To qualify for this designation, the hospital must be licensed or certified by the state to treat traumatic injuries. They must meet criteria that covers many types of emergencies. They have surgeons, nurses, and staff available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are typically regional centers that are always open and always prepared for emergencies, more so than a typical hospital with an emergency room. There are currently 12 Trauma Centers in North Carolina.

Special medical treatment centers such as burn centers, cardiac centers, pediatric centers, etc. should not be signed on North Carolina State Highway Right-of-Way except as specified in the last paragraph.

Direction to a special treatment center or special medical service should be provided by emergency response personnel or an individual's physician, rather than highway signing. There are many different specialties that a hospital can qualify for, but in almost all cases these specialties will be first treated at an ER or Trauma Center, and then transferred to the specialty unit. Ambulance drivers, or drivers of other type of emergency transport vehicles, do not require highway signs to provide direction to the appropriate hospital facility. Additionally, providing too much information on signs about various specialties at hospitals may be confusing to a motorist looking for a hospital for emergency care. For situations involving emergencies, keeping it simple and direct is the best approach for signing.

Signing requests for special treatment centers at hospitals on non-controlled access roadways at or near the entrance to a special treatment center may be considered as follows. If the entrance to a special treatment center is separate from the main entrance and the on-premise signing can not adequately provide this direction, signing to the treatment center, or other special medical service, may be considered at or near the roadway entrance to the center. This request should be directed to the Division Engineer for evaluation.