

Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads assumes base operations at NMCP

By Katisha Draughn, NSA Hampton Roads Public Affairs

The Chief of Naval Operations through Commander Navy Installation Command (CNIC) has directed the transfer of the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) installations to CNIC to streamline base operations. As a result, Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads (NSA HR) officially assumed command of base operations at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (NMCP), Oct. 1.

This will be the sixth facility to fall under the NSA HR command and makes NSA HR one of the largest bases in the region.

"Taking over command of the installation is important not only because base operations is what CNIC and its installation commanders and staff do most effectively and efficiently, but it ensures that as a tenant on a CNIC installation, the hospital and its staff can do what they do best to meet their mission of providing medical care and education," said Capt. Charles Melcher, Commanding Officer at NSA HR.

While bringing the base operations to CNIC standards has gone smoothly, integration of the hospital complex does have some unique challenges.

NSA HR is putting in place a long-term base master plan to ensure the quality of the facility for decades to come. These improvements include widening and upgrading Gate 2 to handle increased traffic flow, widening the main gate to a third entrance lane, obtaining an easement from the City of Portsmouth for a third lane on Effingham Blvd. to eliminate congestion at London Blvd. and Crawford St., adding a truck inspection station and a turn-around lane inside the main gate, adding additional parking on the facility and coordinating plans for a new Mental Health Center of Excellence to provide a consolidated program space for the Wounded Warrior Program and the Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program.

While improving security and access controls, NSA HR is also working to reduce the unnecessary congestion at the gates. NSA HR is formalizing the identification requirements of the unique array of personnel requiring access to the facility to speed access and eliminate the issuing for day passes for access to the facility. Additionally, master-at-arms and Department of the Navy security guards have been at the gates, two guards have been added at each lane, contract guards have been replaced and outbound lanes were converted to inbound lanes at both

gates to improve the morning traffic flow, thus alleviated traffic backups while increasing the security of the facility and its staff.

"Temporary passes we write at the front gate that disrupt traffic flow were the number one delay at the gate," said Alphonso Navarro, security director at NSA HR. "All personnel will be required to have valid identification cards or contractor Rapid Gate cards or specialty passes certified by the hospital and vetted through the National Security and sex offender data bases as of Nov. 12."

With the improvements and increased base operations at NSA HR NMCP, the base will be busy during this transitional period.

"It will take some time for all parties to adjust to these changes and my staff and I are prepared for the challenges that we may face," said Melcher. "We are looking forward to continuing our relationship with the hospital and providing improved support and service to the service members and their families."