

Cyberattack forces Michigan hospitals to switch to paper documentation, divert some patients elsewhere

May 21 2024, by Hannah Mackay, The Detroit News



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A cyberattack against Michigan Ascension hospitals continues to cause issues, forcing it to divert some ambulances to other hospitals for certain

medical issues, delay diagnostic imaging and affecting its ability to fill prescriptions.

A spokesperson for Ascension didn't respond to a request for comment about how the attack continues to impact its operations. But the system said in a statement May 15 that it had even switched to manual paperwork in the attack's aftermath.

Michigan Ascension hospitals, physician offices, and care sites remain open.

Ascension first detected unusual activity on select technology network systems on May 8. Access to systems and [patient care](#) across 15 states has been disrupted since then as the company investigates the ransomware attack.

While working to restore systems and determine what information, if any, has been affected, hospitals have transitioned to manual systems for patient documentation. Ascension said that may cause delays and longer-than-usual wait times at previously scheduled appointments and elective surgeries.

"To help with delays, patients should bring notes on symptoms and a list of current medications, including prescription numbers or bottles," an Ascension spokesperson said in the May 15 statement.

All Ascension emergency rooms in Michigan are still open and accepting walk-ins, and ambulatory diversion is a "normal course of operation, a fluid practice, and is dependent on a number of factors, including case severity, service lines, and availability," according to the statement. Ascension's emergency rooms are in constant communication with emergency medical service providers to ensure cases are triaged more effectively, a spokesperson said last week.

If any rescheduling is needed for surgical, diagnostic, or other doctor's appointments patients will be contacted directly, Ascension said Wednesday.

Ascension did not immediately respond to a request for comment Monday on which Michigan facilities are diverting ambulatory cases and or temporarily delaying [diagnostic imaging](#) and testing.

The [health care system](#) has notified law enforcement and government agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Department of Health and Human Services, and American Hospital Association about the ransomware attack.

"Despite the challenges posed by the recent ransomware incident, [patient safety](#) continues to be our utmost priority," an Ascension spokesperson said last week. "Our dedicated doctors, nurses, and care teams are demonstrating incredible thoughtfulness and resilience as we utilize manual and paper based systems during the ongoing disruption to normal systems."

Ascension is also working with forensic experts from three cybersecurity firms, Mandiant, CYPFER, and Palo Alto Networks Unit 42, to investigate the attack and restore systems, they said in a system-wide update.

2024 The Detroit News. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Cyberattack forces Michigan hospitals to switch to paper documentation, divert some patients elsewhere (2024, May 21) retrieved 22 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-05-cyberattack-michigan-hospitals-paper-documentation.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.