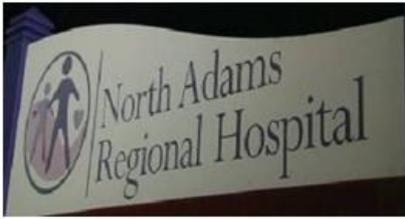


## NORTH ADAMS REGIONAL HOSPITAL CLOSING; HUNDREDS OF JOBS LOST



Workers at the North Adams Regional Hospital were informed on Tuesday that the hospital is closing down after 129 years, according to WNYT. There will be some 530 people without jobs when the hospital closes its doors for good.

The hospital decided to close because it is filing for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The shutdown will affect the VNA & Hospice and the Northern Berkshire Healthcare Physicians Group as well.

Through April 4, current patients will be transferred to other facilities. The emergency room closes for good on Friday of this week.

"In the six years that I have been on the board we have investigated every possible avenue and exhausted all options as we searched for a way to continue operating the hospital and its affiliates," said Board Chair Julia Bolton in a released statement. "Board members, management, physicians, and employees have worked together with dedication and commitment to prevent this outcome. But now, given our finances and the daunting challenges that small rural community hospitals are facing in this healthcare environment, we can no longer continue."

The website for the hospital says that they are the largest employer in North Adams. The hospital has begun helping its employees file for unemployment benefits. With North Adams closing, patients will need to drive another half-hour to get to a hospital.

Pittsfield is where the Berkshire Medical Center is located, which is 22 miles from North Adams. Just 18 miles away is the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center.

"The severity of what is going on caught us all totally off guard," said Diane George, a registered nurse at NARH.

All those working at the hospital, including doctors, said they were shocked by the announcement. Many called the decision a travesty and thought about the next steps.

"The cost of relocation, your family uprooted, if you're in this community all your life, how do you take your family away?" Nancy Bullett, a North Adams councilwoman asked. "Trying to find jobs here is going to be extremely difficult. This is a small town and no way can this town absorb that many people."

"Right now it's hard to get a primary care physician," said Susan Wood, a hospital employee, "Shutting the doors of the OBGYN and the surgeons, where are they going to go?"

Bridget Herman, a resident of North Adams, said that having a medical facility close to her residence is reassuring.

"As a caregiver for my mother who has acute leukemia, not having a hospital nearby, if something happens, is scary," she says.

Timothy Jones, the CEO of the hospital, said that a rapid response team will be at the hospital this week to help employees file for unemployment benefits, write resumes and search for new jobs.

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