

# Media Release

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29 March 2010

## Strike Impact on Emergency Department

The DHB has received notice of strike action by medical radiation technologists (MRTs) members of the APEX union, starting from Saturday April 3. While those striking will provide life-preserving services, there will be no x-ray staff available at the hospital for other cases.

People with minor medical issues are urged to call Healthline or visit their GP to avoid what may be long waiting times in Whakatane Hospital's emergency department over Easter weekend.

Strike response coordinator, Bronwyn Anstis says some patients requiring x-rays may be transferred to Tauranga over the weekend, and contingency plans are in place to ensure patient safety when this occurs.

"The strike means ED will be under pressure and those with non-emergency medical issues may wait a long time to be seen," she says. "Anyone unsure if they need emergency health care should phone Healthline on 0800 611 116. The trained clinical staff will be able to advise on treatment options, and whether more serious medical attention is required."

A medical radiation technologist (or radiographer) is someone who performs x-rays, CT and ultrasound scans. Approximately 80 per cent of patients who come to the hospital require the services of an MRT.

In the two weeks following Easter, APEX has given notice of further strike action by MRTs including working to rule, non-use of the telephone and no evening or overnight services.

There are nine MRTs at Whakatane Hospital and Opotiki Health Centre and the strike action may affect some outpatient appointments and elective surgery.

"We will contact anyone whose appointment may be affected," says Bronwyn.

"If people haven't heard from us, their appointments are still booked and we expect to see them at the allotted time."

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