

What's happening at Miyamura High School?

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Hiroshi Miyamura High School is the focus of attention for people from FEMA, to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, to the New Mexico Emergency Operations Center, to the Navajo Nation, to the Rehoboth McKinley Christian Medical Center as it has been designated as the site for a field hospital for between 50 and 60 COVID-19 patients.

Justin Graff, Public Affairs Chief for the USACE – Albuquerque District, said the gymnasium has been selected as the location for the beds.

The USACE has been given 14 days to have the rooms up at the school. Graff describes them as plastic wall pod-style cubicles located on the gym floor with direct line of site between the pods and the nurse's station.

A utility set will be designed to drop water into the gym from the roof using the building's water for sinks. Oxygen tanks will be installed to run lines to the patient care area. Power, electric and Ethernet will be run to all the pods.

A contract for construction was awarded to Brycon-4 Winds Joint Venture through 4 Winds Mechanical in Albuquerque. It is their job to order and deliver swamp coolers, HVAC pipes, plumbing supplies and oxygen.

Amanda Velasquez is the project lead for the USACE – Albuquerque District. She says she expects some of the pods to be installed by April 10. On the way to installing the pods, there are a lot of moving pieces. One of those is protecting the gym floor, so when the emergency is over, the community will be able to use the building as it did before.

"We have a general template. The biggest part is for everybody to be flexible," Velasquez said.

"The principal, staff, district staff, superintendent, everyone was very supportive and understanding...and having full faith in us. They turned over the keys...really supporting the mission and supporting the community," she added.

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Velasquez is confident that the USACE will complete its part of the project in 14 days.

“Yes!” she said. “We will make it happen.”

In an equally resolute tone, Graff made clear that USACE is working hard to support New Mexico's needs in response to the COVID19 pandemic.

“The state leadership has been proactive and the coordination between state and federal agencies has been running full speed around the clock,” he said.

After the USACE's part of the operation, the New Mexico Department of Health will step in to provide beds and medical supplies.

David Morgan, the Media Manager for NMDOH says efforts are underway to gather everything needed, including furniture and equipment with an estimated completion of the project to be before the end of the month.

Who will fill those beds?

“It is impossible to speculate where patients would come from, Morgan said.

He pointed out that the facility is not yet complete.

By Beth Blakeman
Associate Editor