

Skilled nursing center open after Norovirus outbreak

By Kathryn Reed



Residents at Barton Memorial Hospital's Skilled Nursing Facility were able to spend Christmas with family and friends. This is news because the center had been closed to visitors for about a week because of the Norovirus.

The South Lake Tahoe facility with more than 40 beds reopened on Christmas Eve.

"It was stressful for everybody," hospital spokeswoman Denise Sloan said. "They didn't have any visitors for at least a week."

The angel tree had to be moved outside of the facility so people could come by to pick a name of a resident to buy a Christmas gift for. Residents opened their gifts after lunch Christmas Day.

Norovirus is common this time of year among facilities with contained populations – like a skilled nursing center, jail or cruise ship. The virus is a gastrointestinal illness.

It was January 2007 that this skilled nursing facility was last on lockdown because of the Norovirus.

Facilities try to keep the general public out because the virus can be easily transmitted. At the Barton center all staff members were wearing masks, gloves, paper gowns and

booties so they wouldn't spread the virus from one resident to the next.

The virus typically includes diarrhea, vomiting and stomach cramping. Additional symptoms can include low-grade fever, chills and headache. No specific treatment is available. People usually recover in three days or less.