



**Department of  
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# News Release

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## **VA Implementing National Safety “Step-Up”**

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is calling for a special training campaign on safety – called a “Step-Up” – from March 8 to 14 at all medical centers and outpatient clinics to ensure VA staff follow the highest standards for patient safety.

“The safety of our patients is our foremost concern at VA,” said Dr. Michael J. Kussman, VA’s Under Secretary for Health. “Therefore, I am ordering all of our centers and clinics to re-examine their procedures and safeguards so we know that Veterans will not be put at risk by the people they have come to trust.”

The nationwide Step-Up is the culmination of a VA education program to implement stronger procedures and better accountability at VA health care facilities. The training was triggered by VA inspections that found reprocessing of endoscopic equipment did not follow the manufacturer’s exact instructions at two VA medical centers. The facilities -- located in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Augusta, Ga. -- have already taken corrective action.

VA officials are not aware of any patients having been harmed by improperly reprocessed equipment. Although risks are small, the department is being very conservative and notifying patients who might have been treated by the affected equipment.

Normal activities will continue during the Step-Up at all VA facilities, but with extra emphasis on safety and proper processing protocols. Specific efforts will include retraining on reprocessing endoscopes, establishment of easily-tracked accountability for instrument processing, and training on standard operating procedures by facility leadership.

Patient appointments should not be affected, but individual facilities will notify patients if schedule changes are necessary.

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