Patient safety is a priority at Forrest General Hospital. Often times the community is not aware of the measures taken to protect our patients from injury. The Radiology department is no exception to this rule.

Serious accidents are rare in MRI suites; however, the risk for patient injury is significant. Oxygen tanks, wheelchairs and other medical equipment could become projectiles with the powerful magnetic pull from the MRI.

At FGH, MRI has four safety zones with staggered door entry. Zone 1 is the door to the department. Zone 2 leads to patient seating. Zone 3 is the staff operating area. Zone 4, enclosed behind an airtight door, is the MAGNET/MRI table. Special equipment is required in zone 4 that must not contain any metal. The Radiology department has MRI compatible oxygen tanks, IV poles, Anesthesia Carts and other necessary equipment to safely care for the patients in this area.

The MRI room is lined with copper to reduce radiofrequency signal interference. The MRI Magnet is always “on” even when not in use. Therefore, it is essential to maintain the safety parameters 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

All personnel must have a special badge access to enter safety zone 1 of the MRI Department. Staff must complete yearly competency training to be given badge access.

Patients undergo extensive screening prior to procedures performed in the MRI Department. The questionnaire is concerning previous surgeries, implants or metallic objects retained in the body. All jewelry, hair pins, hearing aids, and other personal belongings that may contain metal are safely stored and returned to the patient after the procedure is complete.

According to Joe Marcello, Service Line Administrator-Heart & Vascular/Oncology/OPACS/Radiology & Radiation Oncology, “Our hospital-based MRI Suites have established and documented MRI safety protocols. These include training of all technologists and nursing staff; education of attending physicians, anesthesiologists, and radiologists. Our safety protocols are reviewed annually and approved by the Department of Radiology. Any changes in in the MRI suite environment are reviewed by the Medical Director and MRI Safety Director. Any MRI incidents are investigated, documented and reported; and deficiencies corrected. “

With these safety procedures in place and specially trained staff, Forrest General Hospital has been MRI Injury free for 15 years!