

Elkin Hospital seeks expansion

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Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital in Elkin has asked the state's permission for a \$41 million expansion of its emergency department.

While many rural hospitals are reducing their services or joining hospital companies, Elkin's has kept its independence. The hospital is seeing a nine percent increase in patients coming to the emergency room yearly.

This would be the second expansion in recent history. Two years ago, Chatham spent \$20 million to add surgical space and imaging equipment. With the expansions, more and more people are opting to go to the local hospital rather than drive to city facilities.

The hospital is currently seeking permission from the state to expand by applying for a certificate of need. The process could take at least six months. If approved, the construction project would start in February and continue into 2010.