

Cyber Security Attack Breaches St. Margaret's Health

This past weekend, on a Sunday morning, a breach in security occurred in the patient information of St. Margaret's Health in Spring Valley,

However, the healthcare provider has no evidence of the breach and is unsure how it even occurred. Linda Burt, VP of Quality and Community Services, said the organizations is taking all the steps to make sure a breach won't occur again.

"We have a number of software applications that are put in place to prevent this," Burt said. "We have not determined yet how this was able to bypass some of those systems. That's why the experts are here."

The breach was detected by the IT department of the facility and forced their network into a shut down. Any web-based operation is not out-of-use for the time being, including email and patient portals.

St. Margaret's Peru systems were not breached since they have not yet been merged. But St. Margaret contacted cyber security experts as soon as the attack occurred. They are more performing a thorough analysis of their system. The Spring Valley location can still use telephone and fax services until the rest is determined safe to use.

Burt said the organization is prepared to continue to operate despite current limitations.

"We have drills, and we have practiced for computer downtime," Burt said. "Our computer systems periodically undergo updates that require the system to be shut down. So we just

implemented all of our paper processes.”

St. Margaret’s Spring Valley will be diverting diagnostic imaging procedures to the Peru branch when possible. This came as a recommendation of their radiologist to ensure nothing will be missed when analyzing high-definition images.

Until a return to normalcy, the Spring Valley branch will be operating in the old-school capacity making the best of paper charts and tests.

The incident points to the recent increase in cyber-attacks on healthcare providers and the importance of having more intense protection on systems in order to protect patient information.

St. Margaret’s Spring Valley is asking for patience and cooperation as staff work toward resolving the issue.