

**Updated - Mass-Casualty Incident, 1977**

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August 31, 2014

Learned today that the old Royal Villa Hotel (and conference center) is the site of the current Providence Baptist Church at 6339 Glenwood Avenue. You know, the high-rise hotel complex that looks like a government bunker, but with a giant cross on the side? (Always pictured that MCI story taking place farther out toward the airport. But recall, the 6300 block of Glenwood Avenue was once the city's western edge.)

Built in 1972, say tax record. The front section is one-story with 46,640 feet. Reinforced concrete construction. The rear is a six-story high-rise with 160,762 square-feet. Sold to the church in 1991, it appears. Cost \$2.6 million. Current value is \$16 million. Overflow parking next door on the site of the old Waffle House. Click to enlarge:



February 13, 2010

While we await the final details on this morning's mass-casualty incident in downtown Raleigh, let's look back at the summer of 1977. On the afternoon of Thursday, June 30, as many as 200 people became sick from apparent food poisoning at the Royal Villa Hotel on Highway 70, west of Raleigh. They were attending a national garden club convention, and had had lunch a couple hours earlier at Meredith College. A private lounge lounge at the hotel was turned into a makeshift medical facility, as area ambulances and rescue squads were rushed to the scene.

Units from Six Forks, Raleigh FD, Wendell, Cary, Clayton, Butner, Wake EMS, and Medical Transport responded. More than 100 responders and nine ambulances helped shuttle patients back and forth to Rex, Wake, and Durham County General hospitals. The county EM director, J. Russel Capps, said it was "largest requirement for ambulances" in the county that he could remember. As the first units arrived and reported multiple patients, the county's emergency plan called "Plan Eagle" was placed in effect.

Several Raleigh city buses were also used to transport patients, who complained of stomach pain and diarrhea. Rex Hospital treated about 75, Wake medical Center treated 46, and Durham County General Hospital treated 40. Many who were transported were suffering from dehydration due to vomiting and diarrhea. Three were admitted at Rex, and one at Wake. By that evening, health officials had taken cultures from the food served at the college.

The lobby of the hotel was filled with patients and responders into the early evening. Wrote the *News & Observer* on July 1, "many of the ill who were able to walk carried plastic garbage cans or ice buckets from their room to use in case they had to vomit." At the hotel's front door, chairs were lined up, for patients waiting for transport. Motel employees and responders also conducted a room-to-room search, to be sure all patients were found. About 500 people were attending the convention, and most were staying at that hotel.

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Mike, I've got the Raleigh Times news clipping from that incident somewhere showing a photo of the ambulances and personnel – I'll try to dig it out and scan it for you.

**Jason Thompson** ([Email](#)) - 02/13/10 - 18:08

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