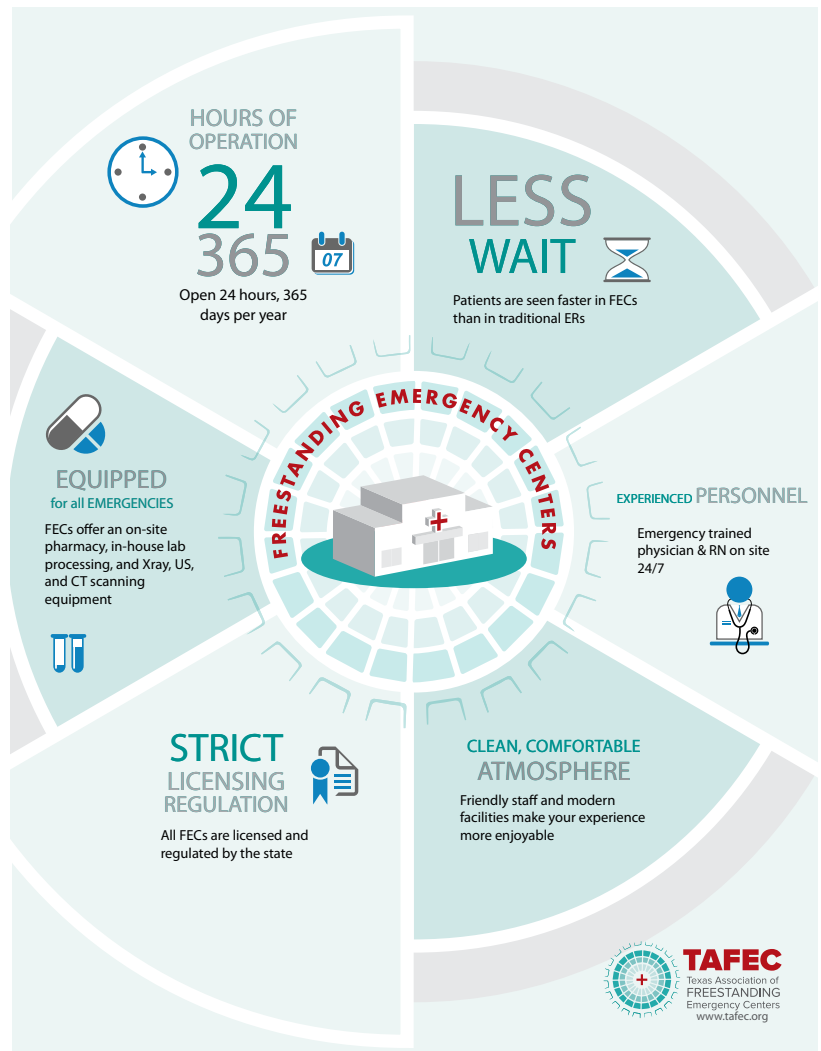


FREESTANDING EMERGENCY CENTERS: AN INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Why are more patients choosing freestanding emergency centers?

Freestanding emergency centers (FECs) offer a unique and vital set of benefits for patients seeking emergency medical care:

- :: **Access** – FECs provide access to emergency medical care for every patient that walks in their doors.
- :: **Quality** – FECs provide consummate quality of care. They are licensed, closely regulated, fully equipped for all medical emergencies and required to have an emergency room (ER) physician on-duty at all times.
- :: **Convenience** – FECs provide unparalleled convenience. They are located nearby for patients and wait time is consistently shorter than hospital ERs. Unlike urgent-care facilities, FECs are required to be open 24/7 to provide all levels of care.
- :: **Cost** – FECs charge equal to or less than hospital ERs for emergency care that often exceeds the hospital ER standard.
- :: **Satisfaction** – Among all urgent- and emergency-care providers, FECs receive the highest satisfaction scores from everyone involved – patients, physicians and staff.



How are freestanding emergency centers different than hospital-based emergency rooms or urgent care centers?

FECs are required to provide the same level of access and services as hospital-based emergency rooms, with the exception of trauma care. But freestanding emergency centers are often located closer to patients. Furthermore, patient wait time is consistently shorter at FECs than at hospital ERs.

As state-licensed facilities, FECs must also fulfill architectural and equipment requirements, and train their staff at a level not required of urgent-care centers.

Unlike urgent-care centers, FECs are required to:

- :: **Operate 24/7**
- :: **Have ER physicians on-site at all times**
- :: **Provide around-the-clock lab and imaging services**
- :: **Stock medications not required for urgent-care centers**

TAFEC

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WHAT IS A FREESTANDING EMERGENCY CENTER?

A freestanding emergency center is a facility licensed by the state to provide 24-hour emergency services to patients at the same level as a hospital-based emergency room.

FECs emerged when ER doctors found an ongoing need for superior emergency medical care beyond hospital walls. Medical emergencies can occur at any time and at any place, which is why it became necessary to take emergency medical care directly to the consumer. FEC facilities are open 24/7, and are conveniently located in neighborhoods and local commerce centers.

- Some FECs are owned and run by hospitals, commonly referred to as hospital outpatient departments (HOPDs). The hospitals operate these ERs as one of their own departments.
- Independent FECs may be owned by physicians or other business interests. Most independent freestanding emergency centers obtain the same accreditation as hospital ERs, so they meet the same standards.



What should a patient expect at a freestanding emergency center?

In the event of an emergency, every second counts. FEC facilities have substantially shorter wait times than other emergency care providers. ER-trained physicians are able to screen and treat patients right away, without wasting critical time in busy waiting rooms.

FEC facilities create a clean, comfortable atmosphere for patients. Friendly staff, state of the art equipment, and modern design are all reasons why FECs receive the highest patient satisfaction rates among all other emergency care providers.

What should a patient expect for costs associated with freestanding emergency centers?

FEC billing is comparable to hospital ERs, just like the level of emergency care they provide. Costs may vary depending on a patient's health plan, which is why patients must be aware of their health coverage in the event of an emergency.

Texas Association of Freestanding Emergency Centers (TAFEC) members believe FECs should treat all patients, regardless of their ability to pay – and as state-licensed facilities, they are required to do so. TAFEC members treat uninsured patients no differently than hospitals do, offering hardship waivers and other reductions to accommodate patients' financial conditions.

Who is TAFEC?

TAFEC is a member-based association representing FECs in Texas. The association works with state leaders to ensure the fair regulation and growth of this industry, as well as raising public awareness of the industry and promoting an overall understanding of the unique benefits of freestanding

emergency centers. TAFEC represents over 125 facilities across the state of Texas. As the organization continues to grow, the mission remains the same – provide a platform from which FECs can speak as a united group to promote the FEC industry.