When it comes to an emergency, first responders and hospital staff need to be ready to act, no matter the situation.

Wednesday, staff at OSF HealthCare Saint James – John W. Albrecht Medical Center were the front line of a simulated radiation contamination situation. The drill is designed to keep hospital staff ready, in case a patient contaminated with radiation ever comes through their doors.

Wednesday's training was supported by Illinois Emergency Management Agency staff and Exelon energy, which operates the Braidwood nuclear generating station nearly 40 miles away from the hospital.

"Since we are so close to the power plant, we are in range if something happens there. In that case, the high school here is a reception center for residents," said Matt Burton, Manager of Radiology and Medical Imaging at OSF Saint James. "If any medical event happens there, the patient would come here. We have to know how to first care for the patient and take the radiation off."

The scenario involved a five year old boy and his father transported to the OSF Saint James Emergency Department. Staff had to assess the level of radiation contamination on each patient, treat a wound on the child's arm, and clean both the father and son of any heightened radiation.

According to Jacob Campbell, Emergency Preparedness Specialist at OSF Saint James, not only does the staff benefit from emergency response drills, but the community can take comfort in the fact the hospital is ready for anything.

"We want to make the public aware that we are ready for any type of situation thrown at us," said Campbell. "Nowadays it could be anything, so it's important that the citizens around us, as well as those we help outside of this area, know that we are fully prepared, and are more than willing to look at what works and what doesn't, to have the best response possible for them."

The hospital regularly conducts emergency drills, so staff can practice their techniques. OSF Saint James conducts a radiation-specific drill every other year.