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Hospital set to expand

The \$10.4 million project will add 19,250 square feet to Mountain View.

Here's a story you don't expect to read in these perilous economic times: A local company is set to begin work on a \$10.4 million expansion project, one that will add 19,250 square feet to its facility and remodel another 3,761 square feet.

"We need the room," said Peter R. Fabrick, vice president of clinical operations at Mountain View Hospital in Idaho Falls. "The business plan works for us. The cost is reasonable. We're taking a risk."

Layton Construction Co. of Sandy, Utah, will begin work at Mountain View on Monday. Fabrick said the project is expected to take eight or nine months.

When completed, the new and improved Mountain View will have 17 additional rooms near its birthing center, which often operates at capacity. The hospital is also remodeling its nursery and will expand its operating room capacity by 25 percent.

The hospital is also leaving room for an emergency room, but isn't sure whether it will ever be open for business. Across the street, Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center features the state's only trauma center. Mountain View wants to be ready in case one of two things occurs: Idaho Falls shows a need for two emergency rooms, or the federal government requires facilities such as Mountain View to have an ER.

"We just want to be in a position where we're prepared," said Josh Tolman, the hospital's spokesman.

Fabrick said Mountain View has seen a significant boost in business over the past two years. So, the hospital will use its own cash to pay for about half the project and will borrow the rest.

Also, Fabrick said the hospital insisted that a large percentage of local contractors be hired for the project.

"By providing a major construction project during difficult times, we hope that we will be in a position to help our local employment structure," the hospital said in a news release.