



Shelter from the Storm: Lessons Learned from Hurricane Irma

Why We Open Shelters

To support evacuation efforts by providing a safe refuge for those who have been forced by a specific threat or impact to leave their normal residences and have no other place to go

Why is this our problem?

- It is the law
 - Providing safe refuge for residents and visitors is a County responsibility
- Florida Statute 252.38 - Counties
 - Safeguarding the life and property of its citizens is an innate responsibility of the governing body of each political subdivision of the state.
 - (D) During a declared state or local emergency and upon the request of the director of a local emergency management agency, the district school board or school boards in the affected area shall participate in emergency management by providing facilities and necessary personnel to staff such facilities.

Sheltering Philosophy

- Life safety is priority #1
- No one will ever be turned away
- Shelters must be a place of safety
- Shelter workers and managers must be strong advocates for their clients
- Clients must remain proactive participants in their own sheltering experience
- All Clients will have equal access to all services offered to the maximum extent possible
- Individuals with functional and access needs are the most knowledgeable of their own assistance requirements

What a Shelter Is & Is Not

- Focused on basic needs and keeping people alive
 - Not a hotel, comfort level is a secondary goal
- A last resort for those who have no other options
 - A lifeboat, not a cruise ship
- Accessible to all
 - Not discriminatory, everyone is welcome
- A safe place
 - No drugs, alcohol, weapons, or violence

Shelter Terminology

- **Evacuation Shelter**

- Capable of providing essential support services
- Designed for populations vacating an area threatened by a developing emergency or disaster
- May be located inside or outside of the disaster area
- May transition to a Recovery Shelter

Shelter Terminology

- **Risk Shelter**

- Facilities located within the hazard risk zone (i.e., lie in the forecast path) that have been assessed to ensure the structures can withstand the threat
- Capable of providing essential support services
- Construction of these facilities meets established minimum safety requirements considered for least risk decision making for the community

- **Host Shelter**

- Facilities located outside of a risk area and is safe
- Capable of providing essential support services
- Construction requirements less stringent

Shelter Terminology

- **Recovery Shelter**

- Utilized for Post-Impact sheltering
- For populations displaced by an emergency or disaster
- Capable of providing essential support services
- Operational in situations that won't exceed two weeks
- Will transition to a Long-Term Shelter if the impacts are severe enough

- **Long-Term Shelter**

- Similar requirements as a Recovery Shelter, but operational in situations that may exceed two weeks

Shelter Types

- **General Population**

- Open to all residents and visitors, no one is turned away
- Reflection of our community

- **Pet Friendly**

- Owners shelter with their pets, responsible for care and feeding
- Designed for household pets (dogs and cats)
- Must be in a crate at all times
- Staff augmented by animal volunteer groups

- **Special Needs**

- For those with specific medical needs
- Pre-registration is required
- Designated to have back-up generator power
- Staff augmented by the Health Department

Who the Clients Are

- Adults and children with and without disabilities, some with access and functional needs
- A reflection of our community:
 - Families, extended families, and individuals
 - Well-off and underprivileged
 - All ages
 - All faiths and backgrounds
 - Those without any other options
- Some have experienced this kind of situation before; for others, this will be the first time
- Most will be nervous, scared, and stressed

Lee County – Irma Shelters

- Largest evacuation in Lee County history
- 34,000 individuals sheltered
 - Largest sheltering operation in Lee County history
- Over 600 Special Needs Clients in 2 shelters
- Approximately 3,000 pets – All shelters pet-friendly
- 14 total shelters utilized