

ORANGE COUNTY PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The People with Special Needs Program (PSN) is designed for any Orange County resident or visitor that during times of disaster evacuation has no other alternative and/or requires transportation assistance to evacuate their home and/or has a health/medical condition that requires medical attention by skilled medical professional in a shelter environment.

Who is eligible and how does someone register?

Any Orange County resident who meets the established eligibility criteria may register. Registrants need to update their information annually or as the registrant's needs change. Registrants that do not update their information annually will be placed in an inactive status.

Registration can be done by:

- Visiting the Florida Department of Emergency Management website at www.FLGetAPlan.com
- Visiting the Orange County Government website at www.orangecountyfl.net
- Contacting and requesting a form from the Orange County People with Special Needs Program (407) 836-9319
- Contacting and requesting a form from the Orange Co. Office of Emergency Management (407) 836-9140
- Asking your Home Health Care Agency to register you.
- Asking your Hospice Agency to register you.
- Asking your Medical Equipment Supplier to register you.
- Asking your Senior Social Service Agency to register you.

Information collected during the registration process is confidential by law and only be given to emergency responders who may provide for the registrant's needs during an emergency.

What other services does the PSN Program provide?

The PSN program provides emergency preparedness information to special needs citizens throughout the year by participating in community events. In addition, persons registered with the PSN Program receive emergency preparedness information annually. PSN Program staff is also available for community presentations.

The PSN Program is also responsible for the management of Special Needs Shelters during times of disaster by deploying the necessary equipment and staff utilized to operate a Special Needs Shelter.

The PSN Program partners with local emergency responder agencies to ensure that residences of persons housed in a Special Needs shelter are safe for them to return home. In addition, the PSN Program provides information on disaster related services that may be needed.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why and when did the registration process for the Special Needs Program change?

In early 2015, The Florida Department of Emergency Management in coordination with local counties developed a statewide Special Needs Registry. This statewide registry provides first responders with valuable information to prepare for disasters and other emergencies.

Why is there more information being requested on the new form, than in the past?

The information that you provide will allow emergency management officials to plan accordingly for disasters. This information will also assist us in case you need to seek refuge at a shelter.

Can I still register if I do not have access to the Internet?

Yes, paper forms will be accepted as a form of registration. They can be obtained by contacting The Orange County People with Special Needs Program at (407) 836-9319. The form will need to be returned to the address printed on the back of the form. Our office will enter your information into the statewide Special Needs registry.

How often do I need to update my registration?

The statewide Special Needs Registry requires that you verify your information annually or as changes occur in your condition. You will be notified at least 30 days prior to the annual verification via email or mail asking you to verify or submit your information. Registrations that are not verified will be placed in an inactive status.

How will I be notified if there is a disaster or hurricane?

Persons registered with the Special Needs Program will receive an automated message providing information on sheltering and transportation via telephone to the home and cell phone numbers provided on the registration. If you are not available to answer the phone, a message will be left on your voice mail. Please note that you may receive a several informative messages regarding the disaster or hurricane.

Where will I go if I must evacuate my home?

Orange County has designated Special Needs shelter sites. Residents are encouraged to monitor their local television and radio stations for emergency/event information. A shelter site may not be utilized for every emergency situation; citizens are encouraged to monitor their local television and radio stations for specific shelter openings and locations.

In addition, to an automated message, a public service announcement will also be made on the radio and television set, specifically announcing “Special Needs” shelter locations. You will be asked to call 407-836-3111 should you require special needs sheltering or transportation. This number should only be used during times of disaster. You will not automatically be picked up if you are registered with the PSN Program you will need to contact us to make arrangements for transportation. If possible, you should try to make arrangements with family or friends for transportation.

What should I bring if I decide to go to a shelter?

If you have no other alternatives and need to seek refuge at a shelter, you must bring with you a minimal number of supplies for your stay at the shelter.

These include:

- Identification Card
- Medical Information Card
- Daily Prescriptions (2-week supply)
- Non-prescription medicines (2-week supply)
- Non-perishable food and water (3-day supply)
- Blanket, pillow, folding chair or cot
- Change of clothing and personal toiletries
- Mobile phone charger, if needed

- Other special items such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, prosthetic devices, walkers, special dietary foods, etc.
- Medical supplies that you utilize on a daily basis, this includes any portable oxygen, cannula, diabetes testing kit, nebulizer, etc.
- A book, magazine, or something to occupy your time while you wait for the storm to pass.

The American Red Cross and/or Salvation Army provide the food for persons at shelters. You are encouraged to bring some food, snacks and water with you.

In addition, please bring the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of family and friends should you need to contact them or to provide information of your whereabouts. Also, leave your porch light on; this will assist the authorities that drive around your neighborhood after the storm to indicate that you have electricity.

Firearms and weapons of any kind are not permitted at any American Red Cross or Special Needs shelters.

Can I bring my family to the Special Needs shelter? Can they stay with me?

Persons seeking sheltering are encouraging to bring a caretaker with them to the Special Needs shelter. Your family will be allowed in the Special Needs shelter with you. Please ensure to bring bedding, food and supplies for them as well.

Can I bring my pets?

Pets are welcome at all “Pet-Friendly” shelters. It is important to bring shot records, food and a crate. Pets are not allowed in General Public Shelters unless they are service animals.

Do I need to register if I am a resident of a nursing home, convalescent and retirement home, or adult congregate living facility?

Residents of nursing homes, convalescent and retirement homes, or adult congregate living facilities are responsible for the evacuation of their own patients and must have emergency plans to handle these types of situations.

Why can't I go to a hospital instead of a Special Needs Shelter?

Local hospitals must maintain the capability to provide for the needs of the very sick or those with life-threatening injuries. Unless you have a life threatening health/medical condition requiring continuous medical attention, you should go to a designated American Red Cross or Special Needs Shelter.

How long should I plan on staying?

You should plan on staying for the duration of the event or until it is safe to leave.

When can I go home?

You will be able to leave the shelter as soon as it is safe for you to return home. Prior to leaving the shelter, your home will be assessed for damage by the damage assessment team.

What else can I do to prepare for a hurricane or other disaster?

Create a personal disaster plan. Identify the specific hazards that threaten your community (e.g. hurricanes, tornados, flooding) in your area and learn about your community response and evacuation plans. Identify escape routes and safe places. In a fire or other emergency, you may need to evacuate on a moment's notice. Be sure everyone in your family knows the best escape routes out of your home as well as where the safe places are in your home for each type of disaster (i.e. if a tornado approaches go to an interior room or closet with no

windows). Your plan should include contact information for family, friends, and members of your support network. You should also include the phone number of an out of town contact.

Assemble a disaster kit for your home. The following should be included in your basic disaster supplies kit:

- 1-week supply of non-perishable food and manual can opener. Include special foods that you require
- 1-week supply of water (one gallon of water per person, per day)
- Prescription and non-prescription medications (enough for 2-weeks). The name and phone number of the pharmacy where you have your medications filled.
- Portable, battery-powered radio or television and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Sanitation and hygiene items (hand sanitizer, toilet paper or any special items that you require)
- Changes of clothing
- Pillow and Blanket/Sleeping Bag
- Photocopies of identification, credit cards, and important documents
- A list of your physicians and their telephone numbers
- A list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of family and friends should you need to contact for assistance in evacuating, sheltering or to provide information of your whereabouts
- Cash and coins (small denominations)
- Special needs items such as eyeglasses, hearing aid, and batteries, etc
- Extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, medication, medical supplies or other equipment that you might need. The name and phone number of your medical/oxygen equipment provider

Review the contents of your disaster supplies kit at least once per year as your family's needs change. Check food and water supplies and medication for expiration dates and rotate or replace every six (6) months. Being prepared and knowing what to do is your best protection.

The Florida Department of Emergency Management can assist you in creating an emergency plan by signing on to their website at www.FLGetAPlan.com

Can I still seek refuge at a Special Needs shelter if I am not registered with the PSN Program?

Yes, you will need to call us at 407-836-3111 when shelter opening are announced on your television or radio. You will be triaged by phone and your level for Special Needs sheltering will be determined.