

Information about Special Needs Shelters

Individuals with special medical needs can get help during an evacuation. Those with certain medical conditions may be able to stay in Pinellas County's special needs shelters, established as a partnership between emergency management, area municipalities, the school system and the health department. Transportation may also be available to those who qualify.

To find out if you're eligible for the special needs or transportation program, fill out a registration form and send it to Pinellas County Emergency Management or your local fire rescue department. You may get a registration form from your home healthcare provider, the Pinellas County Health Department or your local fire department. You may choose to register online at <http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/default.htm>.

If you have registered for a special needs shelter, a health department representative may contact you for more information. If you have registered for transportation, the fire department will contact you prior to any evacuations. You do not need to register for a special needs shelter in advance if you have your own transportation. However, your advance registration helps officials plan for sheltering in an emergency.

The Pinellas County Health Department and Pinellas County School Board provide staff – nurses and others – for the county's special needs shelters. **You should consider a special needs shelter only as a last resort** – if you have no other place to go during an emergency. Shelters do not have hospital beds and cannot assist those with acute medical problems. Air conditioning will be available as long as power is available.

What to bring:

- Any special food you may require if you have special dietary needs. The special needs shelters are set up to provide normal meals only.
- Your own medication – at least a three-day supply.
- Comfort items such as bedding, pillows, sheets and blankets.
- Special equipment you need such as your oxygen concentrator, cannulas, tubing, etc.

For those who may not need to evacuate:

If you live in a non-evacuation zone and do not live in a manufactured home, stay at home unless told otherwise. Stock up on supplies and take steps to make your home safe. Your home will be the most comfortable place during a hurricane. If you depend on electrical medical equipment, talk to your home healthcare provider or physician about what you should do in the event of loss of power to your home. If you are on gaseous oxygen, talk to your supplier about what to do during an emergency.

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