

NEWS RELEASE

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SHELTER REGISTRATION FOR SPECIAL-NEEDS RESIDENTS

The Atlantic hurricane season begins on June 1. As part of their preparation for hurricane season, Pinellas residents with special needs should register now if they are planning to use one of three county shelters during an evacuation.

Special-needs shelters are staffed by the Pinellas County Health Department and the Pinellas County School Board. Nurses and other medical personnel will be available at each shelter. Shelters are equipped for patients who need *minimal* medical assistance, not for those with acute medical conditions.

The Pinellas County Health Department's web site, www.PinellasHealth.com, has disaster preparedness information. The special-needs registration form is at <http://pinellashealth.com/HurricaneInfo/NewSpecialneedsRegistrationForm.pdf>. (Pinellas County Emergency Management also has an online special-needs registration form at <http://pinellascounty.org/emergency/specialneeds.htm>.) To have a form mailed to you, call (727) 464-3800 or contact your nearest fire department.

Even though oxygen is available at special-needs shelters, patients should still bring their own because they will need a portable oxygen source to move around the shelter. Please bring a two-week supply of your medications and any other portable equipment you need. Bring your own bedding and food if you have special dietary needs. Cots may or may not be available.

Special-needs shelters are located at the schools listed below, but not all may be open during every evacuation. Monitor the media for information on which will open during an emergency:

- Dunedin Highland Middle School, 70 Patricia Ave., Dunedin
- Oak Grove Middle School, 1370 S. Belcher Rd., Clearwater
- John Hopkins Middle School, 701 16th St. S., St. Petersburg

If you are registered and need transportation to a shelter, your local fire department will contact you before an evacuation. Only service animals are accepted at special-needs shelters. Please make arrangements to board or send your pet to a host home if you know you will need to evacuate to a special-needs shelter.

For information about the Pinellas County Health Department, go to www.PinellasHealth.com.