

How to create safe and effective hurricane shelters during the pandemic

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During the 2020 hurricane season, emergency management agencies face additional sheltering challenges due to COVID-19. Use this guide to plan for the safe and successful delivery of resources and services.

Facilities and logistics

Challenges

A pandemic event has different and more complex planning elements that must be considered to ensure a safe and successful delivery of resources and services.

- Design facility for basic social distancing and social distancing requirements in sleeping, eating, and restroom facilities.
- Maintain sufficient registration and entry areas.
- Simplify protocols for health questions and intake information.
- Address challenges seen in nursing home environment that may have led to the spread (i.e. shared resources, improper protection etc.).
- House and manage overflow of evacuees from crowded shelters (i.e. motel, who gets rooms etc.).
- Prepare and distribute food.
- Plan for separation by families and individuals.
- Create provision for pets.
- Create provision for homeless population.
- Create provision to check for the wellness of each person entering.
- Make provisions for masks and gloves.
- Establish provision for separation of shower and restroom facilities.
- Prepare for increased security/equipment and personnel.
- Prepare a transportation system for transfers to/from hospitals.
- Prepare temporary morgue facilities.
- Ensure proper HEPA ventilation of air system.

Training and operations

- Train staff on additional resources.
- Establish well-organized plans to accommodate separation of individuals to meet the needs of those seeking shelter, including food preparation, bedding, and restroom areas.
- Determine screening process and location (e.g., curbside screening prior to entry, supplemental screening at intake, intermittent screening).
- Train staff on proper protocol for managing pandemic environment including the use of screening/thermometer scanning and intake protocol.
- Track state and localities' ongoing inventory of PPE equipment and respiratory equipment, as well as sanitizing supplies.
- Determine protocol as to when to involve appropriate authorities, including police, fire, EMS.

Health

- Ensure wellness of those entering the area.
- Ensure that there are separate areas available for symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals.
- Provide medical support onsite.
- Ensure adequate public health workforce and availability of resources to implement strategies (e.g., resources to detect, test, track, and isolate cases).
- Create supply chains for treatment drugs, other PPE, and medical supplies.
- Ensure isolation of infected individuals.
- Maintain physical separation for social distancing.
- Set up isolation care areas for symptomatic/diagnosed clients.
- Conduct ongoing screenings of shelter clients.
- Maintain heightened sanitation.
- Limit shelter visitors.

Facilities and logistics

Training and operations

Health

Challenges

(Cont.)

- Maintain ongoing adequate internet and electrical supply.
- Minimize evacuee attempts to stockpile shelter supplies, like hand sanitizer or toilet paper.
- Calm significant fear and anxiety among the community.
- Provide virtual support services to shelter workers.
- Realize that the need for human and material resources will quickly exceed the capability of any one agency or organization.

Solutions

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ START NOW ▪ Revisit the standard method for sheltering large numbers of individuals and pets to revise plans. ▪ Plan for more shelters (with fewer people). ▪ Establish capability to logistically manage new facilities. ▪ Establish overflow sites to accommodate shelter decompression (to reduce crowding) and higher shelter demands. Consider alternative sites: active or abandoned schools, hotels, shopping centers, community centers, convention centers, warehouses, campgrounds. ▪ Prepare shelf-prepared meals, separate areas to accommodate inability to use cafeteria style, and multiple food stations. ▪ Create a management plan. ▪ Prepare social distancing or barrier protection controls. ▪ Prepare portable social distancing barriers for eating and sleeping. ▪ Prepare social distancing barriers for staff. ▪ Prepare portable health screening kits and materials. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Train staff in COVID safety protocols, symptom check, distribution of supplies, and logistics. ▪ Develop a pandemic safety plan and appoint a safety officer to enforce and modify as required. ▪ Create designated roles such as a Shelter Manager, Safety officer, Onsite Communications Manager, and a Health Services Leader. ▪ Engage shelter residents to be shelter workers. ▪ Utilize a sheltering capacity and capability tracking system to rapidly identify open sites, spacing, etc. ▪ Support N95 respirator fit testing for all agency/facility employees and possible reuse if shortages occur. ▪ Support mask supplies for shelter occupants, as well as staff. ▪ Plan contingencies for respiratory assistance if proper protection or ventilators are not available. ▪ Determine vulnerable supplies and coordinate with vendors now to ensure sufficiency of supplies. ▪ Work with health care coalition to develop allocation plans for vulnerable supplies. ▪ Develop public messages that provide sheltered individuals with daily updates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish telemedicine protocols. ▪ Develop system for virtual care. ▪ Ensure availability of equipment and PPE. ▪ Have cadre of medical and nursing students on hand if necessary, and coordination of other healthcare options. ▪ Establish emergency protocol training to manage vulnerable populations, pets, etc. ▪ Prepare staff to care for patients with COVID-19 and how to transfer them to appropriate medical sites. ▪ Clean and disinfect shared areas (laundry facilities, elevators, shared kitchens, high touch surfaces). ▪ Identify a designated medical facility to refer clients who might have COVID-19. ▪ Provide sanitizers throughout facility. |
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	Facilities and logistics	Training and operations	Health
Solutions (Cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain excess generators for potential loss of power. ▪ Develop air systems to enhance quality of air. ▪ Create computer and audio-visual aids for information. ▪ Create electronic forms for information upon entry. ▪ Orchestrate a combination of resources provided by state, local, tribal, territorial governments, the federal government, private sector, and volunteers to deliver care and emergency assistance to affected populations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine virtual coordination mechanisms that will enable remote engagement of senior staff to prevent exposures and maximize ability to engage in both daily and incident operations. ▪ Develop information sharing process between agencies. ▪ Define risk groups for staffers and create contingency plan for them. ▪ Create new policies and procedures to address concurrent events (i.e. pandemic and hurricane). ▪ Regularly assess clients and staff for symptoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide CDC-approved cleaning supplies, sterilization, and materials. Employ cleaning protocols per CDC guidelines, including alternative methods such as UV light sanitation. ▪ Prepare isolation areas. ▪ Coordinate triage areas with local hospital staff. ▪ Plan to protect health of on-site staff. ▪ Establish outreach and public education. ▪ Address the specific needs of pediatric and at-risk populations in surge capacity planning. ▪ Identify dedicated cleaning staff trained in COVID issues.
Funding options, applicable eligible activities, and available resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State and local authorities in conjunction with the appropriate agency including, but not limited to, FEMA, CDC, HHS ▪ FEMA PA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remote learning resources ▪ Training and information for staff ▪ CDBG-CV Public Service activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FEMA PA ▪ HRSA

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