

## **Pinellas County Special Needs/Evacuation Assistance Program**

***What is this program?*** The Pinellas County Special Needs/Evacuation Assistance Program is a joint project with Emergency Management and the Department of Health. It is for people who have **no other evacuation plan** and need government sheltering and/or transportation assistance during an emergency. The program provides transport to general or special needs shelters. It also can provide for special needs shelter for those that meet the criteria and are **unable to make any other arrangements for sheltering**.

***How do I know if I am eligible?*** For transportation, if you have **no other way to get to a shelter** you can register for transportation assistance. For the special needs shelters, if you have **no other options for sheltering** and you require some medical assistance such as oxygen, assistance with routine care and medications, or you are electrically dependent you may qualify. Shelters do not have hospital beds, and cannot assist those with acute medical problems. When you fill out a registration form, the Dept of Health will determine if you are eligible and advise you.

***Can this program help me at other times?*** This program is activated only when we have a declared county emergency, an evacuation is ordered and shelters are open.

***What is available at the Special Needs Shelters?*** The Dept of Health staffs these shelters with nurses; there are no physicians available. Oxygen is available at the special needs shelters. You will be provided normal meals; you must bring any special dietary foods. You must provide any comfort items such as beds, pillows, sheets, and blankets. Air conditioning will be available as long as power is available. While shelters may have generators for some electrical devices, none will have air conditioning if power is lost. Hospital beds are not available at shelters. You must bring any medications you require (at least a three day supply).

***What if I have a pet?*** Pets (other than service animals) are not allowed in any shelters. If you are evacuating to a special needs shelter and cannot make any other arrangements to shelter your pet, you can call Pinellas County Animal Services at 727-582-2600. They will make arrangements for your pet to be picked up and sheltered during your stay at a shelter. This is available only if you are registered for this program.

***What if I am in a non-evacuation zone?*** If you are in a non-evacuation zone and you are not in a manufactured home you should stay home. Stock supplies and protect your home. That will be the most comfortable place during a hurricane. If you are electrically dependent you should talk to your home healthcare provider or your physician about what you should do. If you are on liquid oxygen you will not need electricity, if you are on gaseous oxygen talk to your supplier about what to do during an emergency.

***How do I register?*** You must fill out a registration form and send it to Pinellas County Emergency Management or your local fire department. Forms are available on-line, from your home healthcare provider or by calling your local fire department, Emergency Management (727-464-3800) or the Dept of Health (727-824-6973). Once you have registered, you will be contacted to advise you of your status. For transportation, your local fire department will contact you prior to any evacuations. You do not need to be registered to go to a Special Needs Shelter but we strongly encourage it. You must be registered if you need transport to a shelter. Do not wait until there is a threat of an evacuation, you may be too late. **Register now!**

***What if I do not qualify for a Special Needs Shelter?*** If you do not qualify for a special needs shelter you will get a letter telling you so. Depending on your situation, you will be told to go to a general population shelter or we will work with you to find an appropriate medical facility where you can shelter.