



JOINT PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2015

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HURRICANE SEASON STARTS JUNE 1ST

Are You Ready Okaloosa?

OKALOOSA COUNTY – Okaloosa County Public Safety and the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) are partnering together to make sure that residents and visitors are ready for hurricane season.

Hurricane Season begins June 1, and Okaloosa County Public Safety would like to remind everyone to review their family disaster plan or create one as needed. Public Safety can assist you in getting started. With the Ready Okaloosa app that is free to download on your phone and Public Safety's webpage located at www.okaloosaf1.com, you can easily access a plan, get evacuation zone information, get a supply list, and retrieve other information to get your family prepared for hurricane season. For more information, call 850-651-7150, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The first 72 are on you!

"We have worked hard to provide numerous ways to educate and assist citizens, including those with special needs," stated Emergency Management Division Chief Randy McDaniel.

"'Ready Okaloosa' just takes it to the next level, and makes us more prepared to plan better, provide education and awareness and ultimately save lives," added Emergency Management Division Chief Randy McDaniel. Also, Okaloosa has a computer-based warning system with the ability to call 1,000 homes a minute with emergency information.

"As we enter the 2015 Hurricane Season, it is important that all Okaloosa County residents have a plan in place, especially those with special health care needs. Hurricane planning should begin well before a storm warning," stated Katie Holbrook, Public Health Preparedness Section Chief of DOH-Okaloosa. "We encourage all residents to be prepared to take care of yourself and loved ones for a minimum of 72 hours."

Those individuals with special needs are encouraged to identify an emergency support network, have an evacuation plan, and build a disaster supply kit. DOH-Okaloosa staffs the special needs shelter during evacuations and storms for County government. The special needs shelter should not be your primary plan, but a plan of last resort.

A person with special needs is someone who during a mandatory or voluntary evacuation requires assistance that exceeds the basic level of care provided at the general population shelter, but they do not require the level of skilled medical care provided at facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes. A special needs shelter is for people who need more medical supervision than a general population shelter can provide due to special medical needs, but they do not require hospitalization. Those seeking accommodation in the special needs shelter must bring a caregiver, all medications and any supplies necessary for activities of daily living.

For more information on the Okaloosa County Special Needs Shelter, visit okaloosa.floridahealth.gov.

To register for the Okaloosa County Special Needs Shelter, visit <https://snr.floridadisaster.org/okaloosa>.

Registration is voluntary and has now become easier with the new statewide registry online. All registrations expire after one year and must be updated on the anniversary of the registration. Registering for the special needs shelter is not a guarantee that the shelter can accommodate your needs. All applicants will receive guidance after registering.

The Department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](https://twitter.com/HealthyFla) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HealthyFla). For more information about the Florida Department of Health, please visit www.floridahealth.gov.

To contact Okaloosa County Public Safety, call the 311 Citizens Information Line, visit www.okaloosaf1.com, and follow us on Facebook at [Okaloosa County Public Safety](https://www.facebook.com/OkaloosaCountyPublicSafety) and [@OKALOOSAEOC](https://twitter.com/OKALOOSAEOC) on Twitter.

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