

HURRICANE SHELTERS

One of the key response elements for any hurricane is mass care, providing shelter and food for disaster victims and workers. The American Red Cross success has been developed through pre-disaster planning, coordinating of community resources, as well as sharing its vast experiences of over 100 years of responding to major disasters. When disaster strikes, the American Red Cross immediately initiates its disaster plan. If local emergency management officials give evacuation orders, then the American Red Cross is responsible for providing temporary shelters away from the dangerous effects of a hurricane.

You should be aware of the emergency shelters designated for your area and the fastest routes to each one. The American Red Cross is concerned above all with your safety and the safety of your family. For this reason, the American Red Cross examines many factors when selecting a hurricane shelter. Some of these factors are described below...

Surge inundation areas - Evacuation shelters will not be located in areas that are vulnerable to hurricane surge inundation. Surge inundation is where a wall of water, pushed ahead of the hurricane, comes inland from a lake, river or ocean and could cause flooding or devastation to the Risk Area.

Rainfall flooding - Evacuation shelters will not be located in areas that are vulnerable to major rainfall flooding. By using Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) prepared by the National Flood Insurance Program, flood inundation areas can be determined.

Wind hazards - Evacuation shelters will not be located in buildings that have either a design problem or a construction problem such as:

- not in compliance with all local building and fire codes
- buildings with long or open roof spans
- un-reinforced masonry buildings
- pre-engineered (steel prefabricated buildings built before the mid-1980's)
- buildings that will be exposed to the full force of the hurricane winds
- buildings with flat or lightweight roofs

Hazardous materials - Evacuation shelters will not be located in or near buildings that manufacture or store certain types or quantities of hazardous material.

Drawing upon their pre-planning arrangements, the American Red Cross personnel have not only identified safe shelter facilities, but have also designated space within these shelter for specific uses, such as child care and feeding areas.

By doing your part, evacuating from a major hurricane can help ensure the safety of your family. Know what to do and where to go. Be prepared!