

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate Release
May 12, 2020

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Sumter County Prepares for the 2020 Hurricane Season with COVID-19

Wildwood, FL -

In preparation for the 2020 Hurricane Season, Sumter County is revising its hurricane shelter plans to accommodate preventive measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Sumter County Emergency Management met with members of the Department of Health in Sumter County, Sumter County School District, University of Florida IFAS/Extension Office, Langley Health Services, The American Red Cross, and The Salvation Army to discuss this year's preparation activities.

The additional preparations include:

- Adding the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 guidance into the various phases of shelter operations including isolation areas
- Adding additional shelter space to allow for social distancing
- Equipping shelters with personal protective equipment (PPE) for those that did not bring their own facial cloth mask, gloves, hand sanitizer, or disinfectant wipes
- Encouraging residents to stay home in their site-built homes

Those persons who live in mobile homes, recreational vehicles, or in flood-prone areas should seek shelter in another location such as the home of a family member or friend before considering the community's shelters.

All persons should have one to two weeks of disaster supplies at home to now include facial cloth masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes. These supplies should go with them to their family or friends house if they evacuate or to the community shelters as a last resort.

Each year, Sumter County Emergency Management provides shelter team workers training in May. This year, the training will include operating the shelters using the CDC guidelines and best hygiene practices.

Sumter County Emergency Management is adding personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and disinfectants to the shelter supplies.

The Florida Department of Health in Sumter County Director's input will be added to the decision-making process of if, and when, to open shelters.

The sequence of opening shelters may be adjusted to minimize the time for evacuees to congregate increasing the need for those in site-built homes such as in The Villages® development to shelter in place. The storm's strength, size, and speed will play a significant role in the decision-making process.

Screening of evacuees entering the community's shelters as well as limiting movement within the facility, staggering mealtimes, and prohibiting congregating in groups as some of the protective measures shelter users should expect.

For more information and updates on emergency preparedness, please visit www.SumterPrepares.com.

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