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## COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS REMIND MEDICALLY DEPENDENT RESIDENTS TO BE PREPARED FOR HURRICANE DORIAN



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**TAMPA BAY, Fla.** – We are in the middle of hurricane season, and as Hurricane Dorian approaches landfall, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) in Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Manatee and Sarasota counties are reminding those who are medically dependent to be prepared for severe weather emergencies.

Special Needs Shelters (SpNS) are available for residents who meet specific criteria and should be used as a place of last refuge. When a storm is approaching and evacuation efforts begin, online SpNS registration efforts stop about 48 hours before impact. Those who have not registered and believe they should go to a SpNS during an evacuation should monitor local media to determine which ones are open and closest to them. Registration is preferred to expedite entry and assist with planning, but registration is not required in an emergency.

There has been some confusion with the process of registering for a SpNS. Many people are under the impression that once they have registered for a SpNS, they are automatically reserved a bed in the SpNS when severe weather is coming.

### What residents need to know:

- Registration does **not** guarantee anyone a reservation at a SpNS.
- If a person is in an evacuation zone and has registered for a SpNS, they will be contacted to confirm that you will be reporting to a SpNS.
- If needed, upon request, Emergency Management (EM) will coordinate transportation to and from the SpNS.
- If they have a caregiver, the caregiver must accompany them and remain with them at the SpNS.

### Who may qualify to be in a SpNS?

- People who are oxygen dependent
- People who are electrical dependent for medical equipment
- People with medical conditions who do not meet the criteria for admission to a hospital and exceed the capability of a general population shelter. Check with local EM to find out who qualifies for the SpNS program.

To register online, go to:

- **Citrus:** <https://www.sheriffcitrus.org/emergency-management.php#special-needs>
- **Hernando:** <http://www.hernandocounty.us/departments/departments-a-e/emergency-management/special-needs-information>
- **Hillsborough:** [HCFLGov.net/specialneedsshelter](http://www.hcfl.gov/specialneeds/shelter)
- **Pasco:** [bit.ly/RegisterPascoSpNS](http://bit.ly/RegisterPascoSpNS)
- **Pinellas:** <http://pinellascounty.org/emergency/specialneeds.htm>
- **Polk:** <https://www.polk-county.net/emergency-management/special-needs>
- **Manatee:** [https://www.mymanatee.org/departments/public\\_safety/emergency\\_management/special\\_needs\\_registry](https://www.mymanatee.org/departments/public_safety/emergency_management/special_needs_registry)
- **Sarasota:** <https://www.scgov.net/government/emergency-services/emergency-management/medical-needs-program>

Preplanning is essential for everyone's safety. Residents need to make emergency plans before there is an evacuation. Don't wait until a hurricane is coming to register for a SpNS.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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