



Pre-Landfall Congregate Shelter Operations in a COVID-19 Pandemic

Overview

Hurricane evacuation is the immediate and rapid movement of people away from a threatened or actual hurricane. Local authorities (such as county judges and emergency managers) in a predicted hurricane path often recommend (voluntary evacuation) or order evacuation (mandatory evacuation) of designated flood zones due primarily to risk of storm surge. In spite of the dangers of hurricanes, some residents may choose not to evacuate or to evacuate late due to costs, fear, disbelief, and other factors.

Hurricane Season 2020 adds the fear and risk of COVID-19 to the decision making of government authorities and individuals. While non-congregate sheltering options are highly preferred to mitigate the risks of COVID-19, a combination of skewed risk perception, time compression, logistical coordination and communication, and lack of available non-congregate options will almost certainly create the need for life-sustaining congregate evacuation shelters during Hurricane Season 2020.

This guidance focuses solely on the tactics of pre-landfall congregate sheltering in a COVID-19 environment in order to ensure the American Red Cross is able to deliver these services, if necessary.

Introductory Videos

- This guidance includes an introductory video: [Watch the introductory video](#).
- The [Sheltering in a COVID Environment](#) video may also be helpful.

Audience

The information contained in this doctrine bulletin applies to region and division leadership planning for hurricane season, DRO Directors, DRO Assistant Directors, Deputy Assistant Director of Response, and HQ Mass Care Chiefs.

Planning Assumptions for Hurricane Season 2020

Planning assumptions are not immutable facts; instead, they are assertions about the characteristics of the future that underlie our operations—planning assumptions will change if and as our operating environment changes. To ensure alignment of planning assumptions and the best options for evacuees, we must communicate now and throughout the season with government and non-government partners, including public health. See the *Critical Conversations Regarding COVID-19 Sheltering* section of the [DCS COVID-19 Compendium](#) to guide these important conversations.

Our most important planning assumptions for the 2020 hurricane season are:

- COVID-19 will continue to be a significant public health threat through the end of 2020.

- COVID-19 will cause a severe scarcity of human and material resources and degrade local and national supply chains.
- Fear of COVID-19 infection will drive some decision-makers (governments and the public) to a range of evacuation behaviors different from recent years.
- Notwithstanding fear of COVID-19, states and communities threatened by hurricanes will need hundreds of shelters with space for thousands of people pre-landfall.
- Non-congregate sheltering options (such as housing clients in hotel rooms) will be the preferred method of sheltering. Wherever and whenever possible, we will shelter evacuees and displaced people in non-congregate shelters as quickly as possible during disaster evacuation and after disaster impact.
- Congregate sheltering will not be avoidable. Non-congregate sheltering options will not always be immediately available in sufficient quantities or in all locations.
- The Red Cross has established and resourced one, unified congregate shelter standard (personal protective equipment, space, isolation, screening, staffing) designed to mitigate the risk of infection. We will apply this standard to all sheltering missions in all locations during the pandemic.
- For those most vulnerable to COVID-19, non-congregate care will be our first approach; if non-congregate options are limited, we will prioritize non-congregate for those with the highest risk for COVID-19.
- There are no “silver bullets” and solutions will vary by time, location, and perception of risk. Red Cross will need to offer multiple options with multiple partners, including government, commercial lodging operators, universities and colleges, faith-based organizations, and others, based on specific local and regional resources and needs.
- Services traditionally provided in congregate shelters will also be provided in non-congregate shelters. However, we may modify the tactics for the delivery of these services to ensure adherence to social distancing guidelines and to limit person-to-person interactions, with preference for virtual support.
- Responders and shelter residents will have a heightened state of anxiety, which could lead to impaired decision-making, irritability, and fear. Accordingly, there will be a heightened need to provide related support and promote self-care.
- We will see an increase in clients seeking non-traditional methods of sheltering to maintain isolation or social distancing. Example: Clients may want to stay in their cars.
- Healthy shelter residents will become part of our congregate shelter workforce.
- Due to the nature of a widespread tropical threat, most shelter residents remain at pre-landfall evacuation shelters for 12-36 hours.
- Significant community damage and secondary hazards, like flooding, will occur post-impact and will prolong evacuation sheltering in certain areas depending on storm impact and speed, and the timing of evacuation.

Types of Congregate Shelters & Transitional Evacuation Sites

During pre-landfall evacuations, the Red Cross may play many roles in providing safe shelters. The Red Cross may manage and/or support various types of evacuation shelters and facilities. Not all types of shelters are used in every state, county/parish, or event.

Congregate Shelters

- **Red Cross-Managed Shelter:** The Red Cross manages shelters in cooperation with a variety of partners. Partners include facility owners and other agencies that provide niche services, supplies, and equipment, or staff members who are willing to participate as Red Cross workers to help the population within the shelter.
- **Red Cross Partner-Managed Shelter:** Red Cross partners manage shelters following Red Cross principles and in cooperation with the Red Cross. The Red Cross often supports partner-managed shelters with human and material resources and subject-matter expertise; therefore, “Red Cross-supported” shelters are now included as partner-managed shelters. Ideally, these are managed through Incident Command.
- **Independent:** Independent organizations manage shelters without operational support from the Red Cross. Independent shelters include those sometimes referred to as pop-up, ad-hoc, or spontaneous shelters.
- **Point-to-Point Shelter:** These are government-managed locations agreed to by a host county or parish and an at-risk county or parish and allow for direct evacuation of a designated population from one location to a second, safer location. The agreement between entities often articulates the responsibilities of host and at-risk governments, as well as the coverage of direct and indirect costs.
- **Refuge of Last Resort:** A refuge of last resort is a last-minute option for people who have been unable, through choice or circumstance, to evacuate the risk area before or after a disaster. The Red Cross understands the need for these lifesaving facilities; however, the Red Cross does not support them. These facilities provide a place for people to seek protection from the elements, but they are not shelters. They do not usually provide food, drink, sleeping accommodations, or other services that people associate with a shelter environment. While planners may identify facilities to serve as a refuge, public messaging regarding the availability of a "refuge of last resort" should only be provided once it is unsafe to travel to a shelter (so not necessarily pre-event).
- **Medical Needs Shelter:** At the state level, these may be known as **special needs shelters**, **special medical needs shelters**, or other designations. These shelters support individuals who have medical issues requiring care beyond the capability of a general population shelter. Local, state, or tribal governments establish medical needs shelters in coordination with public health and social services agencies. Relevant government jurisdictions may coordinate with the Red Cross regarding support for these shelters. Notwithstanding a government decision to establish a medical needs shelter, persons with access and functional needs are ***always*** welcome at Red Cross-Managed shelters.
- **Pet/Animal Shelter:** Only government or community-based agencies manage these shelters. (See the *Pets in Shelters* section of the [DCS COVID-19 Compendium](#).)
 - Stand-alone shelter: A pet shelter not affiliated with, or near, a human shelter

- Co-located shelter: A pet shelter on the same grounds as a human shelter, but physically separate
- Cohabitated shelter: A shelter housing both pets and humans together. Due to the infection control requirements driven by COVID-19, Red Cross does not support co-habitation (except in cases of bona fide service animals). See the *Pets in Shelters* section of the [DCS COVID-19 Compendium](#) for more details on pet sheltering.

Transitional Evacuation Sites

In addition to shelters, which provide overnight stays for evacuees, government will sometimes establish transitional sites that do not provide overnight stays and direct evacuees to appropriate locations. Such sites include:

- **Evacuation Point:** Governments manage evacuation points as central gathering places for people connected to an evacuation. In tropical situations, this term refers specifically to a place where individuals and families gather when they need assistance in leaving an evacuating area.
- **Lily-Pad:** This is a pre-identified, elevated, unmanned drop-off point for search and rescue where the Red Cross may provide material resources for use by partners.
- **Shelter Information Point:** A government manages a shelter information point as a central location used to direct evacuees to shelters. Governments may also offer other services at these locations.

The Red Cross mission pre-landfall is typically to manage Evacuation Shelters—not transitional evacuation sites. Accordingly and in order to ensure the best and consistent use of available resources, any request for Red Cross resources to operate or support any facility or location established for the sole purpose of temporarily gathering evacuees in order to re-direct or transition them to other facilities or locations must be approved by the Vice President, Disaster Operations & Logistics (or designee) as part of seasonal deliberate planning, or in real time during exigent circumstances.

Requirements of Pre-Landfall Sheltering

To enable Red Cross disaster relief operations (DROs) to rapidly support evacuating populations, the Red Cross has established guidelines for all pre-landfall operations. These requirements ensure the safety of the Red Cross workforce and its clients, and the delivery of consistent services that meet Red Cross standards. These requirements are:

1. Red Cross regions collaborate with public health and emergency management agencies to determine appropriate roles and areas of mutual interest, and ensure they are consistent with our mission.
2. The Red Cross role may vary by jurisdiction, so it is important to understand our role in evacuation sheltering in each, specific jurisdiction.
3. Any commitments of Red Cross support for non-Red Cross managed pre-landfall shelters must be made in writing.

4. All Red Cross disaster relief operations maintain regular contact with public health and emergency management agencies to ensure:
 - The Red Cross opens pre-landfall evacuation shelters near evacuation routes prior to the issuing of evacuation orders;
 - The Red Cross is ready to fulfill obligations in facilities in which it has committed in writing to a support role.
5. The Red Cross factors the evacuation of tourist and homeless populations into all planning efforts.
6. The Red Cross may proactively open pre-landfall shelters if it appears that an emergency manager will order an evacuation after the clearance times established in the relevant state FEMA/U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) Hurricane Evacuation Study. This time frame will vary based on specific locale.
7. Any request by emergency management for the Red Cross to open a pre-landfall shelter after an ordered evacuation is considered a no-notice event and is supported only if safe to do so and if resources are available.
8. All pre-landfall shelters managed or supported by the Red Cross must meet the standards set in the [Hurricane Evacuation Shelter Selection Standards](#) to ensure evacuees are located in the safest areas at the time of the onset of hazardous conditions, including significant rains, sustained gale force winds, and coastal flooding. Only shelters meeting the standards may be used pre-landfall unless outside of the [National Hurricane Center Track Forecast Cone](#).
9. In this COVID-19 environment, the Red Cross will provide human and/or material resources only to support shelters that comply with our published standards for infection control, including social distancing, screening, isolation, and dormitories.
10. The Red Cross does not permit cohabitated pet/people shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic. (See the *Pets in Shelters* section of the [DCS COVID-19 Compendium](#)). The Red Cross will work with pet partners or emergency management to ensure pet shelters are run nearby. As a lifesaving action, the Shelter Site Manager has the authority to allow pets (including any breed of domesticated animal) accompanying people to be admitted to a shelter if the pet does not pose a threat to shelter residents. Immediately post-landfall, the Red Cross makes other arrangements to align with public health and Red Cross standards for pets in shelters. (Service animals, including dogs and miniature horses, are always welcome in all Red Cross shelters.)
11. For Red Cross-managed shelters in areas expected to lose power, communications, or utilities, or where infrastructure will fail, the AD of Operations ensures that shelf-stable food and water are on site and makes plans for communication and unmet needs.
12. Shelter residents outside of power loss areas receive at least one hot meal per day.
13. To maximize Red Cross resources, the Red Cross opens, manages, and supports pre-landfall congregate shelters only with capacities greater than 250 shelter spaces unless
 - No other facilities are available for a community; *and*
 - The DRO Director deems the shelter necessary.

The Red Cross works with public health and emergency management to determine the best sizes for dormitory and separate isolation areas.

14. The Red Cross engages in planning with our partners to provide the best possible care for COVID-19 at-risk populations.

Operating a Pre-Landfall Shelter

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All Red Cross workers [must wear personal protective equipment](#) at their worksite until otherwise notified. The Red Cross plans with government partners to ensure we have adequate supplies for screening, dormitory, and isolation areas.

Face masks or face coverings are required in all Red Cross-managed shelters for our workforce, our clients, and our partners.

Pre-Landfall Shelter Staffing

Due to the short-term nature of pre-landfall hurricane evacuation shelters and the need to open pre-landfall shelters rapidly, pre-landfall shelter staffing standards are based on potential evacuation scenarios described in *Hurricane Evacuation Studies*.

- All pre-landfall shelters have a minimum of two pre-trained and in-person shelter staff on duty at all times. At no point should a Red Cross worker be the only worker at a shelter.
- Shelter workers will be informed by the DRO of the type of shelter to which they are assigned and how its services and resources differ from post-impact shelters.
- Pre-landfall evacuation shelters operate on a 12-hour shift schedule.
- The shelter workforce stays at the evacuation shelter when the area is under wind threat. Shelter Site Managers identify a space where off-duty workers stay, maintaining separation from the clients and pre-landfall shelter operation. The pre-landfall shelter workforce is split into the following categories defined below.

Workforce Minimums: COVID-19 Shelter Teams

The Red Cross achieves primary shelter staffing capability through the establishment of pre-trained teams supplemented by shelter residents. If needed, the Red Cross will identify and train event-based volunteers (EBVs) for full shifts. Shelter Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all shelter staff--pre-trained, shelter residents, and EBVs—understand and comply with Red Cross shelter fundamentals.

Shelter Size	Pre-Trained Supervisors	Pre-Trained Shelter Support	Event-Based Volunteers: Just in Time	Shelter Residents: Task Based
250 Clients	2	5	2	As Needed
500 Clients	2	5	4	As Needed
1,000 Clients Not Ideal	4	10	8	As Needed
2,500 Clients Not Ideal	10	25	20	As Needed

- Shelters above the 2,500-person capacity are not recommended for the 2020 hurricane season.
- Disaster Health Services assigns additional staffing as necessary.
- DRO Headquarters (region or disaster response area) assigns at least two people to support pre-landfall sheltering with an additional person added for every five shelters.
- Disaster Health Services assigns two people per five shelters with at least one supervisor per five shelters. Red Cross regions coordinate with their respective jurisdictions to ensure the availability of government-provided health care support for all shelter facilities.

Mass Care Logistics

Due to the nature of pre-landfall sheltering, it is generally not possible to resource a pre-landfall shelter to Red Cross standards for post-landfall congregate shelters. Post-landfall, the Disaster Relief Operation prioritizes achieving all Red Cross sheltering standards as promptly as possible for any congregate shelter that remains open.

The below table lists the standard minimum material requirements for both pre-landfall and post-landfall congregate shelters. Division Disaster Executives may request approval from the Vice President, Disaster Operations & Logistics (or designee) for adjustments based on local seasonal planning. For specific guidance for the Pacific and Caribbean Islands, the Pacific Division Disaster Executive (DDE) may authorize adjustments based on local agreements and Red Cross commitments.

Minimum Material Requirements for Pre-Landfall Shelters:

Resource	Pre-Landfall Opening	Within 72 Hours Post-Landfall
Space for People	60 square feet per person in safest area without cots Families may cluster together	110 square feet per person with a cot
Cots	10 percent of shelter capacity 110 square feet per person (with cots)	1 cot per person
Heavy Duty Cots/Medical	1 percent of shelter capacity	1 for each person who needs one
Blankets	20 percent of shelter capacity	2 blankets per person
Comfort Kits	10 percent of shelter capacity	1 kit per person plus 1 towel
Nursing Kit	1 per shelter	Quantities as needed
Health Screening Supplies	1 per shelter covering 3 days based on capacity	Quantities as needed
Isolation Area Supplies	1 per shelter covering 3 days based on capacity	Quantities as needed
Red Cross PPE Supplies	1 per shelter covering 3 days based on capacity	1 per shelter based on capacity
Shelter Admin Kit	1 per shelter	1 per shelter
Disability Shelter Kit	1 per shelter	As required and available
ADA Showers	As exist at shelter facility (site selection should always prioritize facilities with accessible restrooms and showers)	As required and available
Hand Washing Stations	Hand sanitizer	As required and available
Mass Care Procurement Cards	4 per shelter assigned to pre-trained staff	2 per shift per shelter

Resource	Pre-Landfall Opening	Within 72 Hours Post-Landfall
Weather/AM Radio	1 per shelter	Shift to TV post-impact, if power is live
Shelf-stable snacks, water, and food in areas likely to be without power	Meals for 2 days, 2 meals a day at a minimum; plus, snacks and water (1,500 – 1,800 calories per day). Some island locations may have local meal plans.	3 meals a day plus snacks and water (1,800 – 2,000 calories per day)
Snacks, water, and food, in areas expected to have power	3 meals per day based on current Red Cross guidelines	3 meals per day based on current Red Cross guidelines

DRO Support of Evacuation Shelters

Deliberate planning and actions occur to ensure that disaster relief operations provide support to pre-landfall shelter teams and their residents. DRO Directors ensure the following:

- Communications established between DRO Headquarters and ***all*** Red Cross-managed and Red Cross partner-managed shelter facilities where Red Cross workers are providing dormitory management:
 - Every shelter receives at least one fully charged Red Cross cell phone and at least one fully charged portable charging station prior to opening;
 - Ideally, ensure amateur radio communications are available at all locations;
 - Collect multiple phone numbers for shelter facility and shelter team members;
 - Ensure all shelters have multiple phone numbers to contact DRO Headquarters.
- If Disaster Health Services is not on location at any pre-landfall Red Cross-managed shelter, establish a phone or radio support system for health services.
- For any evacuation shelter that is not Red Cross-managed or Red Cross partner-managed but has Red Cross workers on-site, DRO Headquarters has communication with at least one of those Red Cross workers.

Pre-Landfall Shelter / DRO Headquarters Information Sharing

DRO Directors ensure that a communications plan is in place to gather shelter counts and receive information about the unmet needs of clients when communications infrastructure is compromised.

DRO Headquarters and Shelter Site Managers share the following information:

- Storm arrival information

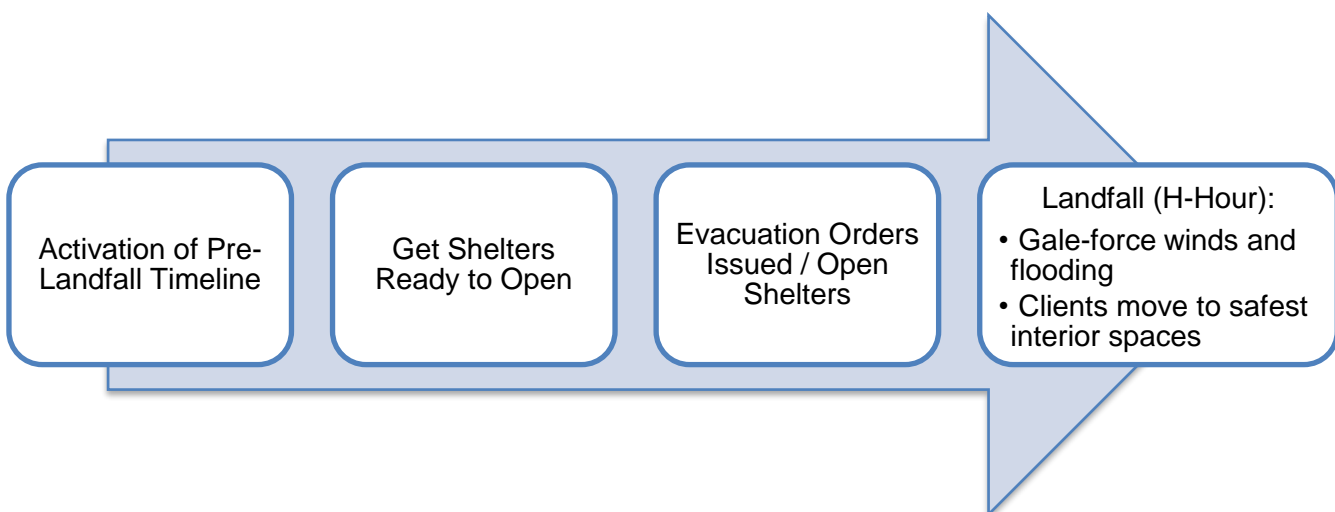
- Storm impact information
- Registration count every 12 hours depending on information needs until impact
- Registration count every 24 hours post impact – or significant change in population
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other critical shelter needs
- Logistics requests and feedback
- Staffing information
- Safety information
- Facility damage information
- Supportive voice / coaching

Planning for a Pre-Landfall Sheltering Response

Opening shelters for an evacuating population requires careful timing, planning, and execution, both at the Red Cross and with partners.

1. Determine sheltering requirements with emergency management and hurricane evacuation studies.
2. Based on available staff and safe shelter space, determine how many shelters the Red Cross has the capability and capacity to open.
3. Apply [Hurricane Evacuation Shelter Selection Standards](#) to all potential shelters.
4. Determine final list and align with emergency management. Share information at the state level.
5. Finalize the timing of expected voluntary and mandatory evacuation orders for geographical areas of concern. Do this in communication with local emergency management and verify with the state hurricane evacuation study or with the state planner responsible for hurricanes.

Region Timeline



Once the government sets the evacuation order timeline, disaster leadership determines the timeline for opening the shelters. Shelters must be open and active when the evacuation order is given. The Red Cross sets this timeline by determining how long it takes to:

- Activate and open the sheltering facilities;
- Activate and deploy shelter teams to facilities;
- Purchase and move food to shelters;
- Move cots, blankets, and other supplies;
- Activate event-based volunteers and conduct operational training—virtually, if necessary;
- Determine if there is any contra-flow that might impact movement of Red Cross assets. Ensure all movement of Red Cross resources occurs prior to activation of contra-flow or have an alternate means of movement.

Once these times are determined, plan backwards from the evacuation order timeframe to decide when to enact each one of these steps to open the shelter system. For the 2020 hurricane season, all Red Cross divisions, regions, and disaster relief operations ***must*** use the approved *168-Hour Hurricane Timeline* (to be issued in June 2020) so each part of the organization works in sync. Communicate Red Cross timelines to emergency management and the workforce.

Related Resources

This job tool supports current Sheltering doctrine and is in conjunction with the following doctrine and job tools:

- [Sheltering Standards and Procedures](#)
- [Operating a Shelter Job Tool](#)
- [Shelter Staffing Template Job Tool](#)
- [Hurricane Evacuation Shelter Selection Standards](#)
- [DCS COVID-19 Compendium](#)
- [Sheltering Section of COVID Toolkit Link](#)
- [COVID-19 Shelter Health Screening Using Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Supply Kits](#)

For Further Information

For further information, contact the Disaster Operations Coordination Center (DOCC) at 202-303-5555 in an evacuation situation, or for steady state, please email shelter@redcross.org.