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## **JOINT PRESS RELEASE: COUNTY OFFICIALS OBSERVE HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WEEK**

*Hurricane Season Starts June 1...Are You "Ready Okaloosa"?*



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**Fort Walton Beach, Fla.** – Okaloosa County Department of Public Safety and the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County (DOH-Okaloosa) are observing May 15-21 as Hurricane Preparedness Week. The Atlantic Hurricane Season begins June 1, and it is a great time to review, update, or create a family disaster plan and emergency supply kit. Several resources are available to assist the public in planning for a hurricane.

“We have worked hard to provide numerous ways to educate and assist residents,” stated Randy McDaniel, Okaloosa County Emergency Management Division Chief. “The *Ready Okaloosa* app just takes it to the next level, and it helps us plan better, provide education and awareness, and ultimately save lives. Okaloosa also has a computer-based warning system with the ability to call 1,000 homes a minute with emergency information.”

The *Ready Okaloosa* app is free to download on mobile devices. The app helps you easily access a plan, get evacuation zone information, get a supply list, and retrieve other information to get your family prepared for hurricane season. It is important for everyone to take action now—especially those with special medical needs.

Together, Okaloosa County Department of Public Safety and DOH-Okaloosa manage and staff the Okaloosa County Special Needs Shelter. 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 skilled medical care or hospitalization.

“We strongly recommend individuals with special medical needs, such as requiring concentrated oxygen or other electronic life supporting medical equipment, to pre-register for the special needs shelter now,” stated Katie McDeavitt, DOH-Okaloosa Public Health Preparedness Section Chief. “Not every medical condition qualifies an individual to be in the special needs shelter, so it’s important to pre-register well before a storm to lessen confusion on where to go during an evacuation.”

The special needs shelter should not be an individual’s primary plan but a plan of last resort. Those seeking accommodation must bring a caregiver, all medications, and any supplies necessary for activities of daily living.

To register for the special needs shelter, visit [snr.floridadisaster.org/okaloosa](http://snr.floridadisaster.org/okaloosa).

Registration for the special needs shelter is voluntary and is easy with the 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.

For more information on the special needs shelter in Okaloosa County, visit [www.healthyokaloosa.com](http://www.healthyokaloosa.com) or call 850-833-9240.

#### **About Hurricane Preparedness Week**

Hurricane Preparedness Week (May 15-21, 2016) is the time to prepare for a potential land-falling tropical storm or hurricane. For more information, visit the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at [www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/hurricane\\_preparedness.html](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/hurricane_preparedness.html).

#### **About Okaloosa County Public Safety**

Register through Ready Okaloosa to receive a free packet of information. The department's mission is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our community with pride and professionalism. To contact Okaloosa County Public Safety, call the 311 Citizens Information Line or visit [www.okaloosaf.com](http://www.okaloosaf.com) or [www.co.okaloosa.fl.us/ps/home](http://www.co.okaloosa.fl.us/ps/home).

Follow us on Twitter [@OKALOOSAEOC](https://twitter.com/OKALOOSAEOC) or on Facebook at [Okaloosa Public Safety Emergency Management](https://www.facebook.com/OkaloosaPublicSafetyEmergencyManagement).

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

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

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