



2017 FEPA Annual Work Session Summary and Recommendations From Mass Care Sessions

Background

Experiences from Hurricanes Hermine and Matthew exposed several vulnerable areas of Florida's mass care system which warranted further conversation and action. The need for a statewide discussion on how best to proceed was crystallized during the Florida Division of Emergency Management's (DEM's) Current Issues in Emergency Management Session in late November and early December, 2016 where determining how best to address the issues was a hot topic. To facilitate this discussion, the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association (FEPA) formalized a Mass Care Working Group and dedicated four sessions specific to Mass Care topics during its 2017 Annual Work Session. Those sessions focused on Shelter Staffing, Shelter Operations, Feeding and Sheltering Hodgepodge. The objectives of each session were to: showcase existing tools, solutions and best practices, highlight challenges; identify pathways to solutions; produce tangible products and identify key issues for the FEPA Mass Care Working Group to address in 2017.

This document is intended to provide a recap of the discussions that took place, share best practices and identify consensus issues to provide direction for the FEPA Mass Care Working Group. It includes a summary of recommendations with proposed Mass Care Working Group issue teams and implementation timelines and a method to chart progress to complete action items.

Shelter Staffing – Workshop Discussion Points

Shelter Staffing

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)/American Red Cross (ARC) Shelter Field Operations Guide (FOG) is a great reference tool.
FEMA regions and ARC coordinate the shelter FOG training.
- Multiple counties have added disaster roles to all employee job descriptions.
- Orange County has a program that utilizes County employees to staff their shelters and has a proven pay plan for compensating employees during disasters. Orange County is willing to share their program details with others who are interested.
- Seminole County has a program that utilizes County employees to staff their shelters and stressed the importance of having consequences and enforcing those consequences for employees who do not show up to work their emergency assignments.
- Seminole County has partnered with their municipalities to utilize city employees to staff shelters.
- Seminole County has formed county department shelter teams where members from the same department all work together in the same shelter.

- Seminole County has an Adopt-a-Shelter program that encourages community and faith based groups to embrace organizing and operating a specific shelter (similar to the Florida Department of Transportation's Adopt-a-Road program).
- Sumter County is using staff from their Tax Collector's office; so be sure to include constitutional offices when exploring local staffing sources.
- Brevard County is in the process of instituting a County Shelter Worker program and has utilized the Lean Six Sigma project management processes to develop methods to determine the number of shelter staff needed, county staff available during emergencies, county policies that would be impacted and solutions for adjusting those policies. Following this project, management increased leadership buy-in/support and is a major reason why the program will be implemented in 2017.
- Hillsborough and Miami-Dade counties have programs that utilize county employees to staff their shelters.
- School boards are a great source of staffing for many counties, but this is not a statewide option as there are still a significant percentage of school boards that decline to take on a larger role, despite the direction provided in State statute.
- While the ARC staffing capabilities have been reduced, they are actively working with jurisdictions to find support solutions that are realistic and reliable
 - This solution could include several staffing options: fully staffing a pre-identified number of shelters (not all shelters), providing shelter managers, simply augmenting county supplied staffing. ARC leaders have expressed that they would be open to adjusting their practices to accommodate as appropriate
- The Florida National Guard (FLNG) is going to be taking on this role (as directed by the Governor); however, this is a new mission and things are still in the beginning stages so more information on this capability is to follow.
 - The FLNG have already identified the need to know how many people are required and where they would be assigned (minimum of 24 hours notice is needed)
 - Deployment of personnel could be a 24-48 hour timeframe
 - FLNG is working with the ARC to train their personnel
- During Hurricane Matthew, Brevard County had FLNG personnel assisting in their shelters, but the county received feedback from the community expressing concern with the soldiers openly carrying weapons inside the shelters.
- Several counties use their school resource officers to manage their shelters.
- Some counties are using the ARC to provide shelter training to their employees, some counties are developing their own shelter training and others are using a combination of the two approaches.
- Multiple counties emphasized the importance of involving all agencies associated with shelter operations in the development of staffing structures and to ensure they are adequately reflected in any standard operating guide or plan.

Shelter Operations – Workshop Discussion Points

Pet Friendly Shelters

- The two basic ways to configure a pet-friendly shelter are:
 - Pets in designated areas, separate from people and the crates stacked (seemed to be the majority approach)
 - School locker rooms are a popular location for placing pets
 - Pets and people collocated in the same space with pets in crates
- State Animal Response Team (SART) capabilities:

There are State Mobile Animal Response Equipment (MARE) and Mini-Mobile Animal Response Equipment (Mini-MARE) trailers in every region of the state.

MARE units have 250 crates and Mini-MARE units have 150 crates

Units must be requested via EM Constellation through the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

- State Animal Response Coalition (SARC) capabilities/recommendations:
 - Coordinated via State ESF 17 and SART
 - They have trained volunteers across the state that can be requested via EM Constellation through the SEOC to support local pet friendly shelters
 - Offer several training courses www.flsarc.org
 - Have extra kitty litter as people frequently forget it
 - Newspaper is cheaper and works better than pee pads, just be sure to layer the newspaper
 - Taping an air filter over an Air Conditioning (AC) intake is an effective solution for significantly reducing pet-dander into the AC system
 - Make sure that a cleaning crew is in place and will clean the shelter immediately after use and prior to returning it back to the facility owner
 - Some counties use professional cleaning services and some use existing janitorial resources to clean up post sheltering
 - Using visqueen to cover floors and other areas makes clean up easier and does a good job of protecting the facility
 - Airline pet crates are best for climate controlled environments and to reduce the spread of diseases, while wire pet crates are better for non-climate controlled environments, but may increase spread of diseases in a close sheltering environment
 - Most cats come in carriers that aren't large enough to include the litter box and food dish
 - Rough estimates are that 70% of shelterees do not bring the appropriate supplies/equipment to pet friendly shelters
- During Hurricane Matthew, Brevard County quickly maxed out the capacity of their four (4) Pet Friendly shelters and had to retrofit two (2) general population shelters into pet friendly to meet the need.
- St Johns County conducted a pet friendly shelter drill in the early summer of 2016 that played a major role in the successful operation of their pet friendly shelter during Matthew.
- St Johns County takes Polaroid pictures of the pets during intake and attaching them to their owner's registration forms to make later identification smoother.
- St Johns County experienced most cats showing up in crates, while most dogs showed up without crates.
- Broward County requires/requests registration of pets going to the Pet-Friendly shelter to help anticipate the sheltering demand. However, due to Department of Justice action, pre-registration cannot be required, so the county will accept pets that show up unregistered.
- The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) has grants available to support the purchase of pet-friendly shelter equipment.
- PetSmart can be a source for donated crates and Purina can be a source donated food for disaster recovery efforts.
- Exotic animals will show up to Pet-Friendly shelters, so develop a contingency plan for dealing with them.

Special Needs Shelters

- Florida Department of Health (DOH) has seen a dramatic decrease in staffing over the last ten years and consequently has fewer personnel to work at special needs shelters.
- Several counties have opted to contract with private nursing companies to provide additional staffing support for special needs shelters.
 - A majority of those counties have selected Maxim Nursing and there are concerns that Maxim will have sufficient staffing to meet the needs for large incidents
- During Matthew, several counties had hospitals and other health care facilities discharge patients who inevitably came to special needs shelters for assistance.
- Clients who exceed the care capabilities of special need shelters won't necessarily qualify for hospital admittance and while some counties have a plan, there was consensus agreement that there needs to be more options for addressing this issue.
 - Miami Dade and Broward counties have partnered with local hospital systems, but need additional facilities to meet the need
 - Brevard County has partnered with local hospitals to provide specialized nursing and equipment at two special need shelters or to care for an agreed upon number of clients at their facility, but also needs additional facilities/staff to meet the expected demand
 - Multiple counties have agreements with nursing homes, rehabilitation centers and other similar facilities to house clients but these agreements can be complicated agreements, especially regarding payment for services
- Invite an Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA) and/or Florida Healthcare Association representative to be in your EOC during an event to handle any issues with health care facilities trying to refer their patients to shelters.
- Home Health Agencies could be a good source of special needs shelter support, but most counties have been unsuccessful in finding ways to engage them.
- Having a plan/facility/options for the pets of special needs clients is emerging as an imperative to caring for special needs clients.
 - Some counties separate pets from the clients and care for them at county animal shelters; some have a joint pet and special needs shelter (same campus, different facility), others have a designated pet friendly special needs shelter and others are still working to determine their plan
- During Hurricane Matthew, multiple counties experienced a surge in residents wanting to register for the special needs program and required additional staffing to support the demand.
 - Brevard County experienced a surge in registrants, but when contacted about actually going to a special needs shelter most declined, including those who were frantic in their need to register just hours earlier.
- Seminole County checks on every registered special needs client following a storm.
- Lee County contracts with United Way to conduct their special needs call downs
- Miami-Dade County utilizes volunteers, 311 and county employees to conduct special needs call downs.
- Several counties reinforced the importance of having a live person perform the call downs and not solely relying on an automated notification considering the circumstances of the special needs clients.
- The DOH Office of Vital Statistics database is a great resource to determine deceased special needs registrants.
- Multiple counties have adopted Seminole County's birthday postcard for maintaining contact with their clients and updating their information annually.

Shelter Feeding – Workshop Discussion Points

Feeding

- It is critical to have a clear understanding of the types of meals that the agency responsible for feeding at shelters will be providing to assist with managing expectations
I.e. hot meals, self-stable, snacks, vendor contracted, etc. Ask for a sample menu, if possible
- Pinellas County stressed the importance of agreeing on meal times at shelters, ensuring that all support partners were in agreement and could execute the plan.
- The ARC remains committed to feeding at Red Cross managed shelters or other locations where they have explicitly committed to support feeding.
- If requested, the Southern Baptists can provide a liaison to your EOC.
- Florida Baptists need approximately 72 hours lead time to be fully operational (this standard can vary)
- Florida Baptists' food is provided/paid for by the ARC (only when activated at the direction of the ARC) and United States Department of Agriculture USDA) food commodities program.
- State ESF 11 (Food and Water) coordinates providing USDA food to Mass Care feeding organizations and works with the local county school boards (commodities stored at schools) and the federal USDA on this issue.
- State ESF 11 will also buy private sector foodstuffs for the Salvation Army and Florida Baptists should that be needed for a catastrophic event.
- ESF 11 is not designed to feed at shelters; ESF 6 (Mass Care) is better suited for this mission.
- Currently, there is no agreed upon formula for estimating the community food needs of an area post disaster.

- Indian River County Mass Care feeding partners and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) members partnered on a concept where they surveyed local churches with kitchens that would be willing to cook food to support the local community's needs; if that food was supplied to them and then delivered by either the ARC or Salvation Army into the impacted areas. This was utilized as an alternative to using large mobile feeding kitchens and resulted in increasing their post-disaster feeding capabilities beyond what the large mobile feeding kitchens could have provided.
- Salvation Army sends initial units based on worst case scenarios, coordinates with impacted EOC for priority feeding areas and shares damage assessments back to the EOCs.
- Salvation Army prefers to have canteens in a fixed location and then have rovers go out into the impacted areas.
- Salvation Army suggested working with school boards to identify areas where additional food can be stored.
- Salvation Army recommends developing a local Feeding Taskforce which should be expanded to include local kitchens, caterers, resources, suppliers, churches, etc. and can share planning documents to help those interested in starting one.
- Salvation Army offers trainings on feeding concepts and will travel to teach them.
- Second Harvest Food Bank – there are fourteen (14) sites statewide, supplied by Feeding America
 - Have lots of self-stable meals, refrigerator trucks, etc.
 - Feed lots of people every day and interested in being more involved

- There are some school districts that have feeding trucks that they deploy to underserved neighborhoods during the summer, which can also be used to do mobile feeding.
- Florida DEM can provide support for feeding operations (water, dumpsters, hand washing stations, etc.) .
- Florida DEM emphasized that the trend in schools is moving away from fully capable kitchens to more of a warming type of kitchen which would impact the kind of food that could be prepared and should be accounted for in future plan updates.
- Mercy Chefs are another possible option for post-disaster feeding www.mercychefs.com.
- Dry-frozen and dehydrated foods were suggested as alternative to Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), for facilities that don't have kitchens or as a back-up for school and other kitchens.
- Remember – many gas kitchen appliances require an electric starter to ignite.

Shelter Hodgepodge – Workshop Discussion Points

Host Sheltering

- There is no clear definition of what a host shelter is. The term means different things to different groups.
- There is a lack clarity on who activates host sheltering for the State and who determines what shelters will be opened.
- During Hurricane Matthew, the unexpected issue of no hotel rooms in Florida being available prompted the need to implement Host sheltering, which was initially disorganized and muddled.
- There was not a clear message on the host shelters that were open or where evacuees could be directed for a “one-stop shop” of information.
- Lee County did not feed at their Host shelters since all stores and restaurants were open
- Charlotte County opened their first ever Host shelter at a Parks and Recreation Department building and it was staffed by county employees.
 - Pets were in a separate room at the shelter and the fire department provided support to those who needed oxygen
- Hillsborough County initially opened risk shelters when they were forecasted to be impacted and then left a reduced number of shelters open to serve as Host shelters.
- Orange County has a robust Host shelter program with well-established plans and procedures.
- The Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) would like to develop a more structured approach to Host sheltering going forward.

Short-Term/Recovery Shelters

- St Johns County had a shelter open for almost three weeks following Hurricane Matthew (staffed by ARC) with a shelter population that was split between those who were displaced by the storm and those that were homeless prior to the storm.
 - Experiences from this shelter operation are:
 - Required intense, creative and collaborative case work by all social services agencies to resettle folks and close the shelter
 - Recovery shelters require more resources
 - Embrace the idea that there will be a “period of discomfort” during these situations and that there will not always be a solution for someone’s need

Experience highlighted the need to recognize the distinction between homeless because of the storm and homeless prior to the storm. This has an effect on how to handle their post-storm housing issues.

Did not separate the homeless from regular shelter population due to a variety of operational and legal considerations

Discontinuing feeding operations at a shelter can encourage shelterees who don't have storm related unmet needs to leave and expedite the closing of a shelter

Was the only recovery shelter open in the region which complicated things – had a few shelterees from surrounding counties

A hotel is not the same as a permanent home and when that stay runs out, those folks will need assistance again finding a place to live so plan for things to come in waves

- Pinellas County stressed the importance of having plan for how you will close a shelter and that needs to be in place before you open the shelter.
- Florida DEM has Functional and Access Needs support trailers, but realistically these assets are only available to counties post-impact.
- FEMA has Functional and Access Needs Shelter Teams for long-term shelter operations.
- FEMA has Transitional Shelter Assistance Teams to move people out of shelters.

Note: Neither of these teams was available during Hurricane Matthew-sheltering population was too small for FEMA's involvement (according to FEMA).

Summary of Observations, Challenges and Trends from Mass Care

Sessions:

- New methods/incentives need to be developed to better engage school boards to become more active and consistent participant in all phases of shelter operations.
- Florida DEM is reexamining the terminology utilized to describe shelters in the Statewide Emergency Shelter Plan – initial thoughts
 - Host shelters = when you open shelters in your community to support evacuees from another county
 - Risk shelters = when you are inside the forecasted areas to be impacted
 - Recovery shelters = when you are operating shelters 72 hours post-impact
- During Hurricane Matthew, several counties experienced issues where pets were being dropped off at county and community animal shelters during the evacuation (regardless of whether or not there was staff on-hand to receive them) and then, most of them, returned to pick their pets up after the evacuation.
- During Hurricane Matthew, Pet Friendly shelters experienced high shelter usage (several counties reported that this was their highest totals ever) and if that will be the public's tendencies going forward, then Pet Friendly sheltering capabilities will have to be expanded statewide.
- The Special Needs Shelter space deficit is a long-standing issue that needs more attention, a strategy should be developed for addressing the challenge and funding allocated to implement solutions.
- There was consensus agreement on the need for the Health Care Coalitions (HCC) to get more engaged with Special Needs Shelters and explore appropriate areas where some of HCC funding can be utilized to strengthen capabilities.

- Leadership in many counties has the perception that the ARC is a massive agency with access to enormous caches of resources, which is simply not the case. Local leaders need to be better educated on the realistic capabilities of the ARC. This misconception is hampering leadership's will to find additional support sources.
- Developing a detailed scope of services with the ARC was a recommended action.
- Given the changing shelter staffing structures, revisiting how ARC- 4496 standards are being applied to shelters may be worth exploring.
- There was consensus agreement on the need to establish Mass Care mutual aid options (strike teams, shelter staffing teams, etc.) and explore methods for implementing a Mass Care Mutual Aid type of program.
- The need for generators (dedicated emergency powers) at shelters remains a long-standing service gap.
- There remains no dedicated funding stream to expand sheltering capabilities in the State Shelter retro-fit is primarily limited to funding hardening facility projects.
- The FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is also mostly focused at facility capabilities
- It was noted that most of the items highlighted during the discussions require financial support to truly address the issue and all alternatives should be explored or these issues will be destined to be repeated.

Conclusion:

The information and input acquired during the FEPA Annual Meeting workshops was very valuable. Participants should be commended for their candor and professionalism during the exchange of ideas, experiences and expertise. Through the Mass Care Working Group, FEPA is committed to monitoring progress on the issues presented in the document and, through its membership, making a positive contribution to their resolution.

The FEPA Mass Care Working Group has organized teams to work through the action items identified in this report. Identified teams, topics and leadership are identified below:

- **Shelter Terminology Team**

Unify the terminology used to describe shelters and other core sheltering concepts to create a standard definition guide that ensures all partners are speaking the same language.

Team Lead – Mary Blakeney, Palm Beach County Emergency Management

- **Shelter Staffing Team**

Identify alternative sources for shelter staffing and develop a proposed organizational structure and related supporting materials for those entities looking to build their own shelter staffing program.

Team Leader – John Scott, Brevard County Emergency Management

- **Host Sheltering Team:**

Develop a joint State/County Standard Operations Guide for Host Shelter coordination.

Team Leaders – Sandi Bridges and Sandra Tapfumaney, Lee County Emergency Management

- **Pet Friendly Shelter Operations Team**

Identify methods and tools for expanding pet friendly shelter capabilities in Florida.

Team Leaders – Alan Harris, Seminole County Emergency Management and Consie Von Gontard, Florida State Animal Response Coalition (SARC)

- **Shelter Training Team**

Establish the basic components for shelter training and design a generic shelter training template that can be shared statewide.

Team Leader – Inaki Rezola, Pinellas County Emergency Management

- **Shelter Feeding Team:**

Identify sources for feeding support and develop a reference book that details agencies, capabilities and operational needs.

Team Leader – Jessica Geib, The Salvation Army

Table of Mass Care Working Group Team Composition and Progress Report (as of 4/14/17)

Team Name	Topic Area	Team Leader(s)	Progress
Shelter Terminology	Identify alternative sources for shelter staffing and develop a proposed organizational structure and related supporting materials for those entities looking to build their own shelter staffing program.	Mary Blakeney Palm Beach County Emergency Management	
Shelter Staffing	Identify alternative sources for shelter staffing and develop a proposed organizational structure and related supporting materials for those entities looking to build their own shelter staffing program.	John Scott Brevard County Emergency Management	
Shelter Operations	Develop a joint State/County Standard Operations Guide for Host Shelter coordination.	Sandi Bridges Sandra Tapfumaney Lee County Emergency Management	
Pet Friendly Shelter Operations	Identify methods and tools for expanding pet friendly shelter capabilities in Florida.	Alan Harris Seminole County Emergency Management Consie Von Gontard	

		Florida State Animal Response Coalition	
Shelter Feeding	Identify sources for feeding support and develop a reference book that details agencies, capabilities and operational needs.	Jessica Geib The Salvation Army	