

State of Florida Regional Evacuation Guidelines

**Formerly known as the Regional Evacuation Procedure as cited in the 2012 State
Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan**

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A. Introduction

This operational guideline will be used by the State Emergency Response Team and participating organizations in the State of Florida to coordinate multi-county, regional, and multi-regional evacuations in response to any hazard which would necessitate such actions. This document defines the scope of guideline, details the concept of operations and assigns responsibility for implementation.

B. Purpose

This guideline establishes a consistent operational methodology for the State Emergency Response Team therein to coordinate regional, multi-regional evacuations.

C. Authority

This guideline is adopted as an operational element of the Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan developed in accordance with Chapter 252, Florida Statutes, and is incorporated by reference thereto. As such, it is intended to be consistent with and supportive of the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, and to be implemented, when needed, with the same authorities under law as provided therein.

D. Scope

This guideline applies to all State Emergency Response Team personnel and partnering response agencies tasked with planning for and implementing regional evacuations. Implementation of this guideline is under the direction of the State Emergency Response Team Chief, through the State Emergency Operations Center. This guideline defines the circumstances under which regional evacuation coordination in Florida may be necessary. It also defines the roles and responsibilities of SERT and partnering response agencies. This guideline does not replace the authorities or responsibilities of county and municipal governments in Florida to develop, test, and implement evacuation plans within their own jurisdiction.

E. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. Overview

This section describes the concepts and provisions through which the SERT will support a regional or multi-regional evacuation.

2. Planning Assumptions

The principal assumptions underlying the concept of operations for a regional evacuation are as follows:

- Activation of this guideline will occur for all hazards which could necessitate evacuation and sheltering operations involving multiple counties. However, the need to implement certain aspects of the guideline, such as opening shelters in non-threatened areas or terminating evacuations and opening refuges-of-last-resort, may vary based on the specific hazard, degree of vulnerability, and projected area of impact.
- The evacuation of large numbers of people from vulnerable areas will stress the capabilities of available transportation networks, potentially requiring significant clearance times to complete an evacuation. Consequently, a regional evacuation in some areas must be initiated several days before landfall.
- Regional and multi-regional evacuations will require a substantial level of personnel and equipment, which could exceed the capabilities of county jurisdictions. Resource may be pre-deployed through mutual aid to multiple jurisdictions.
- Coordination between state and local agencies involved in the implementation of a regional evacuation will occur through exchanges of information regarding decision-making, protective actions, and resource coordination and deployment. This is accomplished through the Regional Protective Action Worksheets, Incident Specific State/County Conference Call, and other vehicles of communication where necessary.
- The capacity of available public evacuation shelter facilities in and adjacent to the impacted region may be limited, potentially requiring the use of shelters outside the evacuating region. Statewide coordination will be necessary to effectively communicate protective action and shelter information to evacuees.
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- For certain hazards, large vulnerable populations and limited evacuation road networks may necessitate termination of evacuations operations prior to completion and evacuees still at risk would be directed to refuges-of-last-resort as quickly as possible. .
- A regional or multi-regional evacuation will require coordination with numerous jurisdictions to maintain an effective and safe movement of evacuation traffic out of the impacted areas and to adequate shelter locations.

3. Operations

The SERT will monitor hazardous situations as they develop, and the progress of the evacuation operations and exchange information on an established time schedule to promote effective coordination by all involved jurisdictions.

The SERT will conduct regular conference calls between the SEOC, threatened county emergency operations centers (risk and host) with appropriate state and federal agencies. When related to an approaching Tropical Cyclone, conference calls are held at 11:15 and 17:15 involving the National

Hurricane Center, SERT, all 67 counties, and appropriate entities (Weather Field Offices, Water Management District, etc). Issues, unmet needs, or situational awareness related to evacuations will be discussed at the end of the conference call.

In addition, the State Emergency Operations Center will coordinate with local emergency management agencies as to the level of support required from the SERT to implement protective actions, including the pre-deployment of personnel and equipment resources, if applicable.

Under certain circumstances, the State Coordinating Officer may recommend to the Governor that an evacuation is necessary in an area that has not yet ordered an evacuation. The SCO may recommend that the Governor Order and evacuation authorized through 252.36(5) (e) Florida Statutes.

The SERT will coordinate current information on the volume of traffic on monitored evacuation routes, and the status of open public shelter space. ESF-14 will coordinate public information through the various media outlets of any change in evacuation routes, the availability of hotel and public shelter space in host counties, and relevant information.

After the threat has passed, the SERT will coordinate with impacted counties to collect county status for re-entry traffic. This information will be centralized for information sharing purposes and disseminated to appropriate outlets. Post-event activities will also include a review and critique of the regional evacuation guidelines to determine the need for any modifications, and/or for more training or exercises to improve the capabilities of response personnel to implement this guideline.

5. Pre-positioning of Necessary Resources

Implementation of a regional evacuation will require substantial personnel, equipment and supplies at various locations along the evacuation routes and at facilities designated as risk and host shelters. In addition, the resources may need to be prepositioned before an evacuation operation is to commence. Upon implementation of this guideline, the State Emergency Operations Center will instruct the responsible state agencies to pre-position resources as identified in the Emergency Support Function and/or hazard-specific annexes or as agreed to during state-local coordination. To the right is a list of the types of resources that may be prepositioned.

Pre-Positioned Resources
Electronic programmable message boards
Portable AM / FM radio transmitters
Tow trucks
Gasoline tankers at stations along regional routes
Ambulances and medical personnel
Shelter management personnel
Buses for transport of evacuees without other means of transportation
Sampling / testing equipment and personnel

6. Information Exchange

In order to effectively support an evacuation, it is essential that every involved organization have timely and accurate information regarding the current characteristics of the evacuation status and operation, resource availability, and the impacts. Information will be coordinated and disseminated through ESF 14, email, EM Constellation, GATOR, conference calls, and any other appropriate venues where necessary.

7. Managing Adjustments to the Regional Evacuation

During an evacuation, it may become necessary to adjust or modify support to evacuation operations. The most readily apparent reasons for such modifications could include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Changes in the direction or intensity of the hazard;
- Blockage or excessive vehicle congestion on a regional evacuation route;
- Filling of available capacity at public shelters and hotels/motels in host counties;
- Anticipated failure to complete the evacuation prior to hazardous conditions impacting evacuees.

For other situations that cannot be anticipated during the planning of an evacuation, the State Emergency Operations Center will work with the affected county emergency operations centers and all relevant agencies at the time to coordinate and support adjustments in the evacuation. In the event of a physical blockage of an evacuation route, the state will coordinate with the affected jurisdiction's county emergency operations center and other counties, as necessary, to remove the blockage. If removal is not feasible, the State Emergency Operations Center will coordinate with all affected county emergency operations centers to plan and implement alternative routing.

8. Host Response Operations

An evacuation will generate impacts outside areas immediately at risk and may necessitate the use of local resources in non-threatened counties to support the response. The State Emergency Operations Center will request activation of response operations in designated host regions outside the immediate area of impact where necessary. If so, the State Emergency Operations Center, in conjunction with the Governor's Executive Order, will coordinate assistance of any or all local governments within Florida, and request as needed adjacent state emergency management agencies, to support evacuations as follows:

1. The State Emergency Operations Center will designate, through a state mission, host regions to implement protective actions in support of evacuations in risk counties. All county emergency operations centers within designated host regions will activate and prepare to initiate host response plans.
2. All counties within designated host regions will be included in the Governor's Executive Order and all requests by the Governor for emergency disasters and major disaster

declarations.

3. State Emergency Support Function 16 will coordinate traffic management issues with State Emergency Support Function 1/3, local law enforcement from all counties within host and risk regions and with highway patrol agencies and Departments of Transportation from Alabama and Georgia, when necessary.
4. In support of regional host response operations the State Emergency Operations Center shall, at a minimum, make the following information available to host regions, including those in other states, on a continuous basis or when warranted by the situation:
 - A. Department of Transportation real-time traffic counter data for roads within the host region or on all roads leading into the region;
 - B. Traffic Reports from State Emergency Support Function 16;
 - C. Any significant changes to the situation in adjoining counties that may have an impact on host sheltering operations;
 - D. The content of any public information released by state agencies.
5. Upon receipt of a state mission, each county within designated host regions will:
 - A. Coordinate host response activities including traffic management, host sheltering and public information with all counties within their designated region.
 - B. If applicable coordinate refuge-of-last-resort to address the possibility that evacuees may be stranded on evacuation routes within the host region;
 - C. Participate on state protective action coordination conference calls;
 - D. Exchange critical information to all counties within the region via regional conference calls. Relay host region information to the State Emergency Operations Center.
6. All counties within host regions will provide the following information to the State Emergency Operations Center:
 - A. The need for a State Emergency Response Team Liaison or additional personnel
 - B. Location, capacity and status of host shelters;
 - C. The location of all county variable message signs, host shelter information or local staging areas;
 - D. Any reports from local law enforcement of road conditions or status that may impact host sheltering; and
 - E. The resources needed from state agencies to support host response plans.

9. Completion of the Evacuation Operation

All risk and host county emergency operations centers will notify the State Emergency Operations Center of the estimated time of completion of the evacuation within the local jurisdiction, and subsequently, when the evacuation has been completed. Upon receipt of such information, the State Emergency Operations Center will notify all county emergency operations centers within the impacted region accordingly.

10. Re-entry into the Evacuated Areas

Following an evacuation, the process for re-entry into the evacuated areas must be coordinated to ensure the safety of the public, protection of property, and effective response of the numerous organizations and jurisdictions involved. The state will obtain the re-entry status for all affected counties and disseminate through the appropriate ESFs, as well as the media and other appropriate stakeholders.

Each county emergency operations center will be responsible for making a determination that re-entry has been completed for its jurisdiction, and promptly informing the State Emergency Operations Center. Following receipt of information from all affected counties that the re-entry process is complete, the State Emergency Operations Center will notify every county emergency operations center in the affected region.

F. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Overview

The section describes the general responsibilities of the principal organizations and agencies expected to participate in the implementation of an evacuation which would require state assistance. Additional duties and responsibilities of individual agencies and organizations are defined in the Emergency Support Function or hazard-specific annexes.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management

Each year, the Division of Emergency Management will coordinate with all counties to ensure that state and local agencies and organizations are adequately prepared to implement a state assisted evacuation. To assure this preparedness, the Division will undertake the following duties:

- Support state and local agency planning efforts through necessary meetings and training sessions, and ensure that each hazard-specific annex is current and valid;
- Solicit the involvement of other state agency representatives in the planning process where necessary;

- Fulfill the State's role in developing and presenting the necessary public information programs to support implementation of this guideline, in coordination with the needs of local public information programs;
- Review this guideline and provide training to appropriate State Emergency Operations Center staff;
- When appropriate, exercise evacuation operation protocols during the annual state-wide hurricane exercise, nuclear power plant exercises, and other training opportunities to promote improved understanding of its operational concepts at the local level; and
- Ensure that all county emergency operations centers and other agencies and organizations have an up-to-date copy of this guideline.

During a state assisted evacuation, the Division of Emergency Management shall have the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate with ESF 1/3, and county EOCs to ensure that all toll booths, draw bridges, and other known impediments to the traffic flow along evacuation routes have been addressed;
- Continually monitor the direction, intensity, and potential for escalation of the hazard;
- Continually compile information from each county emergency operations center for statewide situational awareness.
- Provide State resources to assist in the implementation of the evacuation as requested or pre-designated;
- Prepare and release appropriate public information in concert with county emergency operations centers; staff the Florida Emergency Information Line and respond to inquiries from the affected population;
- Continually monitor the progress of the evacuation; determine if the evacuation will be completed prior to impact of hazardous conditions on evacuees or if changes to the operation are necessary;
- Upon notification from one or more counties that an evacuation route has been blocked, expeditiously support county requests assistance in cooperation with the county emergency operations center(s) with responsibility for the affected portion of the route;
- If the evacuation is to be terminated prior to completion, the SERT will support actions from

the county emergency operations centers for termination; coordinate media releases and public information broadcasts with county emergency operations centers to instruct evacuees to seek county designated refuges-of-last-resort;

- Mobilize state response personnel to provide medical, search and rescue, transportation and shelter services, and other needed resources to impacted evacuees promptly after the hazard has passed;
- Assist counties where refuges-of-last-resort have been utilized in securing the necessary resources and personnel; and
- Take other such actions during an evacuation operation as may be indicated by the circumstances or on request of the county emergency operations centers.

In order to determine the point of completion of a regional evacuation, the Division of Emergency Management will undertake the following duties:

- Utilization the technologies (Traffic Counters, Video Monitoring, etc) on transportation routes managed by ESF 1/3, receive and share information via the Regional Coordinators, EEI and protective action conference calls, identify the point when each involved risk and host county emergency operations center has determined the evacuation within their jurisdiction to be complete
- Notify all Emergency Support Functions and Counties EOCs of the time of completion of the evacuation process, to initiate demobilization of appropriate personnel;
- Issue appropriate public information regarding the completion of the evacuation, the number of shelters opened, etc.

Following utilization of this guideline for each evacuation operation, the Division of Emergency Management, working with the affected risk and host counties, will lead an after-action assessment of the event and regional evacuation operations to address the following:

- The effectiveness of this guideline and any indicated changes needed;
- The timeliness and technical validity of the decision to implement a regional evacuation;
- The adequacy of the personnel, equipment and supply resources available and the timeliness of their mobilization, as well as the responsibility for taking any corrective action;
- Any additional training and/or exercise needs in regional evacuation planning as indicated;
- The effectiveness of the public information utilized and the responsiveness of public behavior;

- Any other circumstance or condition that indicates a need for modification of plans and guidelines or the provision of additional resources.

Following such an assessment, the Division of Emergency Management will coordinate the tracking of resolutions of deficiencies to assure any corrective actions indicated are implemented in a timely manner.

County Agencies and Organizations, Other State Agencies

In order to maintain the capability of effectively implementing a regional evacuation, all State and local agencies and organizations that support emergency operations, working under the coordination of the State Emergency Operations Center and each county emergency management agency, will accomplish the following:

- Participate in and support, as appropriate, regional evacuation planning efforts;
- Provide information regarding the organization's available personnel, equipment, facilities and supplies to facilitate the implementation of regional evacuations;
- Review appropriate state and local guidelines to ensure adequate understanding of the organization's responsibilities and commitment pursuant to each potential hazard;
- Integrate the responsibilities and operational concepts defined in the hazard-specific annexes into the organization's other emergency plans and guidelines;
- Provide and/or participate in training regarding the implementation of regional evacuation guidelines;
- Maintain preparedness to implement the organization's responsibilities when events necessitate or the Governor directs a regional evacuation to occur;
- Upon the Governor's decision to implement a regional evacuation, conduct local operations to support the evacuation in accord with this guideline and other plans and guidelines utilized by the county emergency operations center; and
- Participate in after-action evaluations and assessments of this and other state and local guidelines.

Maintenance of this Guideline

Annually, the Florida Division of Emergency Management, working through the designated Area Coordinator as needed, will take the following steps to ensure that this guideline is maintained:

- Ensure that regional evacuation planning meetings are convened and that, at a minimum, participants complete the following activities:
 - ÷ *Review the existing regional evacuation guidelines for all hazards to ensure continued accuracy and validity, and make any necessary modifications;*
 - ÷ *Review the availability of regional evacuation routes, public shelters and hotel/motel capacities for all hazards, and modify as needed;*
 - ÷ *Determine the need to develop additional guidelines;*
 - ÷ *Ensure that training in this guideline has been made available locally to all relevant agencies.*
- Consider simulated implementation of this guideline as a part of the annual state-wide hurricane exercise, nuclear power plant exercises, and other training opportunities;
- Modify this guideline and/or the hazard-specific annexes accordingly;
- Review all state level public information materials to ensure their adequacy to support and facilitate a regional evacuation anywhere in the state;
- Identify any state or federally sponsored construction projects that may significantly decrease the capacity of any designated regional evacuation route; coordinate with the involved agencies to evaluate and define feasible alternative actions in the event of an evacuation along that route; and
- Provide training for the State Emergency Operations Center staff in the use and implementation of this guideline.