

Hurricane Evacuation Centers

At the beginning of each year, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) presents the American Red Cross of Greater Miami & The Keys (ARC) and the Miami-Dade Department of Emergency Management (DEM) with a list of schools that are available for use as hurricane evacuation centers. A structural survey conducted by a structural engineer and an ARC survey to determine evacuee capacity is required for each school that receives the designation of hurricane evacuation center. The ARC 4496 Guidelines set the minimum hurricane shelter selection guidelines county emergency managers must use when surveying and evaluating hurricane evacuation centers. The ARC 4496 addresses such areas as geographic location (i.e. outside of pre-determined evacuation zones), storm surge inundation, rainfall flooding, lay-down hazard exposure, wind and debris exposure, wind design, construction type, building condition, exterior wall construction, window protection, roof construction and emergency power.

In the mid-1990's, a public shelter design criteria titled "Enhanced Hurricane Protection Area" (EHPA), was designed to ensure that new schools could meet or exceed applicable construction standards. Since the inception of the EHPA criteria, DEM has prioritized schools with EHPA when selecting hurricane evacuation centers. This is based on their increased structural integrity above the ARC 4496 standard.

A hurricane evacuation center list is released to the public annually on May 1. The list is based on consensus among ARC, DEM and MDCPS, geographic location, capacity, structural integrity, accessibility for people with disabilities and practicable amenities such as restrooms designed for adult use. The primary group of 20 hurricane evacuation centers is sorted into four waves of five schools that are geographically disbursed around the County. The primary hurricane evacuation centers meet all the aforementioned criteria and additionally have a capacity greater than 1000; have a full service kitchen which can store a two to three day supply of food; ample parking and evacuees have access to all shelter areas in the facility during the lockdown period. The determination of how many hurricane evacuation centers to open depends on the evacuation order issued by the County Mayor. Individuals that are unable to provide their own transportation to a hurricane evacuation center can use public evacuation transportation. Miami-Dade Transit will activate specific Emergency Evacuation Bus Pick-Up Sites by zone as directed by DEM. These Emergency Evacuation Bus Pick-Up Sites are identified by a sign that reads "**EMERGENCY EVACUATION BUS PICK-UP SITE.**" The buses placed into service for the evacuation will have displays that read "**EMERGENCY EVACUATION** " and these buses will only travel between the Emergency Evacuation Bus Pick-Up Sites and the opened hurricane evacuation centers. Once a hurricane evacuation center reaches 80 percent capacity, an additional hurricane evacuation center in the surrounding area is opened. **All Miami-Dade County hurricane evacuation centers accept individuals with service animals.**