

**Response to Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs**

**“Challenges in a Catastrophe: Evacuating
New Orleans in Advance of Hurricane Katrina”**



**CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

C. Ray Nagin, Mayor

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Special Needs Shelter Plan Activation Guidelines

- A Category 3 or greater hurricane is projected to strike the city
- A probability greater than 20% of the hurricane hitting the city
- A recommended evacuation order from the Mayor of New Orleans has been announced
- The hurricane will reach landfall within 36 hours.

Purpose of the Special Needs Shelter

The Special Needs Shelter (SNS) was intended for individuals who have no other recourse put to remain in the city and who need assistance that cannot be guaranteed in a regular shelter, i.e. medication that requires refrigeration, oxygen equipment, etc. Individuals will be admitted to the SNS based on specific and stated criteria. Admission to the SNS does not relieve any individual of the responsibility for their own care. The City of New Orleans is not assuring protection from harm within these facilities and admission into the SNS is **NOT TO BE INTERPRETED AS A GUARANTEE OF SAFETY OR PROVISION OF SERVICES.**

It is critical that individuals understand that this shelter will not be a substitute for the comforts of the individuals' homes, and that all equipment and special furniture which they are normally accustomed to **WILL NOT** accompany them. It is absolutely necessary for the individuals with special needs and/or their responsible family members to develop a viable plan for transportation out of this community to a community that will be able to assist them long-term. The potential exists that this community will be without sufficient supplies to meet the needs of persons who do not have special medical problems or chronic conditions, and there is a significant risk being taken by the individuals who decide to remain in a SNS.

Population Admissible to Shelter

Individuals who are without the resources to evacuate from the city as requested by city officials and meet the following criteria will be admitted to the SNS:

- Individual is able to provide their own basic care but has a chronic, debilitating medical condition requiring intermittent or occasional assistance
- Individual is not acutely ill
- Individual is dependent on electricity on an intermittent basis for necessary medical treatments or refrigeration of medications.
- Individual has been triaged by shelter staff to assure that he/she meets the criteria and is a candidate for services that can be supported by the SNS.

Individuals that require constant care or who require constant electricity to support machines necessary to maintain life will not be admitted. Individuals who are evaluated by SNS staff and found to be acutely ill will be referred to local hospitals for definitive care.

Each individual admitted to the SNS will be responsible for:

- Personal medications, equipment necessary to administer medications such as inhalation machines, etc.
- Personal care materials (toothbrush, soap, towels, drinking water, blanket, pillow, air mattress, diapers, etc.)
- Personal belongings including at least five (5) changes of clothes.
- Non-perishable foodstuffs, including specific dietary requirements. This includes at least five (5) days worth of meals.
- One (1) caregiver will be allowed to accompany an individual admitted into the SNS. Entire families will not be allowed into the SNS.

Activation Procedure

The announcement by the Mayor will trigger the mobilization of the following agencies to coordinate and operate the Special Needs Shelter.

- Designated representatives from NOHD and DSS will oversee the SNS operations (medical and non-medical respectively) and will report to both the NOOEP Emergency Operations Center and the State of Louisiana Command and Control Center (CCC) as necessary.
- DHH will provide medical support in the form of eight (8) nurses.
- DSS will provide support in the form of social services staff to assist as needed.
- The Louisiana Army National Guard will provide one medical company as well as Guardsmen for security and policing of the Superdome grounds.
- The New Orleans Criminal Sheriff-Food Service Division will provide meals for the staff.
- NOHD will provide ten (10) community health nurses, shelter administrative staff, EMS staff, food service staff, medical supplies and equipment as available.

The Superdome will be used as a refuge of last resort after a curfew is activated by the mayor.

Transportation

Every attempt will be made to use every available mode of transportation to evacuate the city.

We will make every attempt to fill those special need shelters first.

Specific Actions Taken:

Place: Superdome Girard Street Loading South Loading Dock Gate E

Call: 658-2500 for triage

Time: Sunday August 28, 2005 at 8am

Criteria: Must not need electricity on a constant basis
 Need caretaker (only one)
 Must bring food, medications and water three days
 Must bring batteries and oxygen for three days
 Need of medical care with disabilities, not nursing home patients.

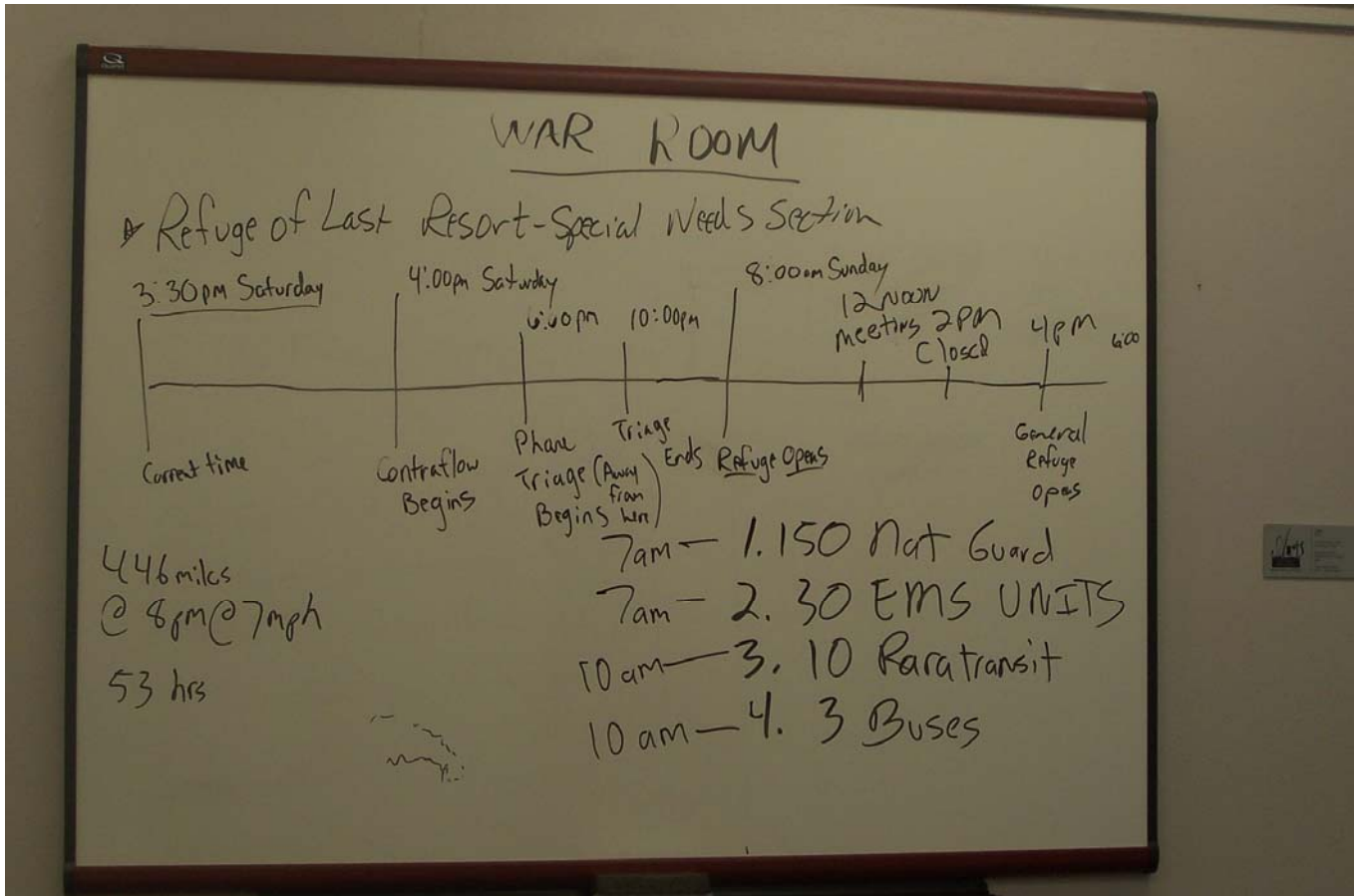
Displayed for the public were the following numbers for assistance:

Triage #'s are as follow:

Baton Rouge:	800 349-1372
Alexandria:	800 841-5778
Monroe:	866-280-7287

Transportation Assistance #'s:

Acadian	1-800-259-1111
Lifeguard	214-1711
Guardian	818-2600
A-Med	362-9490
On Call	866-0481
Care	367-4231



The New Orleans Health Department calls to order many meetings in preparation of upcoming hurricanes. Also called are debriefing meetings where we incorporate the lessons learned into our hurricane planning. With a history of opening the Superdome as a Special Needs Shelter as recent as Hurricanes Isidore and Ivan, these meetings call for mandatory attendance by all involved.

Once again, the New Orleans Superdome was opened by the City of New Orleans Health Department on Saturday, August 28, 2005 for staging and stocking with supplies. We able to stock dry goods along with beverages that would last for (5) five days. Food for Families assisted in providing the necessary supplies.

On Sunday August 29, 2005, the Superdome was opened for special needs patients. We were able to obtain (10) ten para-transit vans and (3) three city buses which allowed us to transport over 450 special needs patients to the Baton Rouge Special Needs Shelter. Due to traffic congestion, 600 patients remained in the Superdome. These patients were appropriately triaged for the duration of Hurricane Katrina and were evacuated immediately once we were cleared to leave.