



NEWS RELEASE

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Alan Levine
Secretary

Telephone Lines Activated for Medical Special Needs Shelters

BATON ROUGE – In preparation for the opening of Medical Special Needs Shelters, the Department of Health and Hospitals and the Department of Social Services will open triage phone lines on Friday.

Medical Special Needs Shelters are specifically for individuals who need medical attention and cannot evacuate the areas that may be affected by Hurricane Gustav. The phone lines are for individuals to call **BEFORE** attempting to access these shelters, to ensure that you or your loved one meet the admissions criteria, and also to ensure that the shelter is **OPEN**. **These lines will open at 8 a.m. Friday morning.**

Health officials note that **if individuals have health problems that require medical expertise and must evacuate, it is best for them to go with family members or caretakers north to areas that are out of harm's way.**

Shelters in Baton Rouge, Alexandria, Monroe, Shreveport and Hammond are on standby to open for this storm.

Those seeking shelter will be screened by nurses to determine the level of care needed. If they meet admissions criteria, they will be sheltered. If their condition is too critical, they will be referred to a hospital for sheltering, or admission. If their condition is not severe enough for Medical Special Needs Sheltering, they will be referred to a general shelter.

New Orleans	1-866-280-2068
Houma-Thibodaux	1-800-228-9409
Lake Charles	1-866-280-2711
Shreveport	1-318-676-5015
Mandeville	1-866-280-7724

Baton Rouge	1-800-349-1372
Lafayette	1-800-901-3210
Alexandria	1-800-841-5778
Monroe	1-866-280-7287

Medical Special Needs Shelters are designed for individuals who are homebound, chronically ill, or who have disabilities and are in need of medical or nursing care, and **have no other place to receive care**. The intent of the Medical Special Needs Shelter is to provide, to the extent practical, an environment in which the current level of health of evacuees with special needs can be sustained. Electrical power for support equipment like oxygen converters will be provided by generators if local power fails.

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Medical Special Needs Shelters are not designed for the general public or for nursing home patients. Nursing homes in Louisiana are required to have emergency evacuation plans in place that ensure the health and safety of their residents. In most instances, these plans allow for homes in affected areas to transport their patients to nursing homes in areas safe from the storm.

Medical Special Needs Shelters will provide medical support services only. Because of limited staffing, those going to a Medical Special Needs Shelter must have a caretaker to assist with ongoing support, and they should bring all necessary supplies, sheets, blankets, pillows, durable medical equipment, a five day supply of all medications and their driver's license or another form of identification.

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