

Polk County Tourism, Polk County Emergency Management and Publix Partner to Distribute 2018 Polk County Public Shelters Maps

Auburndale, FL (May 23, 2018) – In preparation for hurricane season, which begins on June 1, Polk County Tourism and Sports Marketing and Polk County Emergency Management will again partner with Publix Super Markets to produce and distribute the "Polk County Public Shelters" maps for 2018. This annual map is designed to assist both resident and tourist evacuees in finding shelter during an impending storm.

“In the event a hurricane threatens Central Florida, we will work closely with our accommodations partners to determine the supply of available rooms. This information is critical in helping evacuees find lodging. We want our guests to have a safe and pleasant experience, in spite of the circumstances,” said Mark Jackson, director of Polk County Tourism and Sports Marketing (PCTSM). PCTSM relays this vital information to Polk County Emergency Management (PCEM) and area lodging facilities. PCEM uses this data to decide when and where to open shelters, once area accommodations reach capacity. Evacuees can then be directed to open shelters using the "Polk County Public Shelters" map, which lists shelter locations on one side and directions to those shelters on the other. The map also provides sources of emergency information, important telephone numbers and a list of recommended items to include in a “3-Day Survival Kit”.

The 2018 map includes 47 shelters, three of which are designated as “Special Needs Shelters” for residents with medical or physical conditions that would require special assistance during an emergency. Pre-registration is recommended, by contacting Polk County Emergency Management at (863) 298-7027. Three additional shelters have been designated as “Pet Friendly” with pets being limited to dogs, cats and birds only. Specific requirements apply at “Pet Friendly” shelters, so it is advised to check those requirements in advance. It should be noted that not every shelter may be opened during a particular storm, so evacuees are advised to confirm that a specific shelter has been activated prior to going there.

The public shelters maps are available at Central Florida's Visitor Information Center, located at 101 Adventure Court, Davenport, ½ mile south of I-4 on Highway 27; and at Publix Super Markets in Polk County by the end of May. The map, printed in blue this year, contains updated information for 2018. Businesses and residents are advised to discard older maps of different colors. Area lodging facilities and chambers of commerce will also have maps on hand in the event of a storm. A copy of the map is available online at www.polk-county.net/prepare - scroll down and click on "Emergency Shelters" (on the left). For more information about emergency preparedness in Polk County, visit www.polk-county.net/em.