



MARION COUNTY

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Gail Colletta
c/o Florida Action Committee Inc.
Via e-mail only to: gail@floridaactioncommittee.org

February 8, 2022

Dear Ms. Colletta,

I am in receipt of your correspondence regarding hurricane and emergency preparedness. In it, you pose six questions that I will attempt to answer in-turn.

1. Where can registrants evacuate to during a hurricane or natural disaster?

Sex offenders and sex predators may evacuate to any location at which they may lawfully be present, provided they are in compliance with their registration requirements. They can also choose to shelter at the homes of friends, family, and neighbors, or in designated shelters.

2. If separate provisions are made for registrants on probation vs. registrants not on probation, what are they?

While we would not handle sex offenders and sex predators differently based upon their probationary status, I am unaware of the practices of the Department of Corrections in this regard and as such I cannot fully answer your question.

3. If specific shelters have been designated for registrants, what is/are the location of those shelters?

No specific shelters have been designated as of this time. However, pursuant to Marion County Ordinance 9.5-54(b), the Marion County Jail may be used as a shelter location for sex offenders and sex predators and we anticipate it would be so used. If expected wind speeds are less than 100 miles per hour, adequate space does not exceed need, and it is otherwise deemed appropriate, the Marion County Sheriff's Office Visitation Center, next to our Sex Offender and Predator Unit (SOPU), is also possible shelter location. It is possible other shelter locations may become available depending upon the nature and severity of the emergency and the demand for shelter by sex offenders and sex predators.

4. Will registrants be separated from their family if seeking shelter in a designated location?

It depends.

First, we will not permit the minor children of any sex offender or sex predator to be housed with other sex offenders and sex predators. Our reasons for this include the need to provide

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for the safety of these child(ren) as well as the probability that the presence of any child would cause many sex offenders and sex predators at these shelters to be in violation of their conditions of probation which would necessarily include a prohibition against contact with children.

Second, because we need to provide staff to work in the housing units where persons are being sheltered, in order to ensure the maximum efficiency of staff and provide for the safety of those sex offenders and sex predators in the jail, we would not permit persons of any age who are not sex offenders or sex predators to be sheltered in the jail.

Third, we are presently uncertain whether we would permit adult family members of sex offenders and sex predators to be sheltered with sex offenders and sex predators in places other than the Marion County Jail. This is due primarily to space limitations and the need to ensure that sex offenders and sex predators who cannot go to other shelters have adequate space to be sheltered. That would be decided based on the specific emergency.

5. If an evacuation lasts more than three days, are registration locations open during the hurricane or natural disaster to enable a registrant to comply with registration requirements.

Our agency is fully committed to ensuring sex offenders and sex predators comply with the requirements of Florida law. Registration locations will remain open unless it would be unsafe to open them, at which time alternative actions would be taken.

6. Who can a registrant contact for more information during an emergency?

Our Sex Offender and Predator Unit (SOPU): 352-368-3517 or the Emergency Management Division: 352-732-8181.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM "BILLY" WOODS
SHERIFF OF MARION COUNTY

By: Timothy McCourt
General Counsel
Florida Bar No. 44604

Copies to: Emergency Management Director Bowlin; and
Lt. Mongeluzzo (SOPU).

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