

Florida Domestic Violence  
Centers

Disaster Preparedness

*Rob Schroeder*  
*Teleconference ?*

AGENDA

- WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
- YOUR HURRICANE EXPERIENCES
- POWER POINT PRESENTATION ON DISASTERS
- WHERE DOES THIS GROUP BEGIN?

Florida regularly contends with three types of potential disasters:

Wildfires  
Hurricanes  
Tornadoes

### How does each preparation differ?

*Hurricane:* Exists from 1-3 weeks.  
It can be tracked to some degree of certainty.  
Hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30, peaking in September.

*Tornado:* Attacks with little or no notice

*Wildfire:* Stalks, taunts, is unpredictable

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### Four Phases of Emergency Management

1. **Preparedness** is taking action before an event to ensure you are ready for the emergency. These actions include developing your plan, training your employees and pulling together your disaster supplies.
2. **Response** is the action that you take immediately in response to the threat, primarily to ensure everyone's safety.
3. **Recovery** is the work of restoring your center operations damaged or interrupted by the disaster.
4. **Mitigation** involves taking the steps to prevent or lessen the effects of an emergency or disaster or, at least to reduce your risk.

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### Preparing

Each center needs:

1. A staff disaster specialist or team depending upon the size of the center.
2. An all-hazards plan -- protocols for all types of potential disasters
3. A committee to review the initial plan and review it annually
4. A yearly budget for start-up and replacement supplies

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## Protocols

- ✓ One protocol for each disaster type (some overlap may occur)
- ✓ Clearly marked in a bound notebook or a Power Point presentation (per center preference)
- ✓ Each protocol should include a time-line.
- ✓ Each protocol should outline specific staff instructions or job titles

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## Each protocol should address:

- ✓ staff training
- ✓ assessment of inventory
- ✓ procedures to be followed at each facility during all stages of the disaster
- ✓ staffing procedures
- ✓ distribution of resources, supplies
- ✓ delivery and management of center services
- ✓ worst case-scenario procedures

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## Typical facility preparation focus:

Hurricane and Tornado: stages from 6 wks - zero

- ☐ shore-up building: loose parts, windows, doors
- ☐ secure grounds
- ☐ assure internal safety: safe room
- ☐ assure internal comfort: bedding, food, water
- ☐ assure emergency domestic violence services
- ☐ maintain telephone/electricity
- ☐ emergency evacuation & secure empty facility
- ☐ attention to special needs survivors: elder, mobility needs, dietary needs, medical, medication needs etc.

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Consider Safety Protocols or Checklists for a Variety of Situations

floods, tornados, lightning, wildfires, sinkholes, extreme heat/cold, caring for pets, hazardous materials or substances, fires, disruption in power service, terrorism, bomb threat, violent crime, death of key staff or a civil disturbance

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FCADV's Role

1. Assist centers with current information
  - a. Liaison/monitor NOAA
  - b. Liaison/monitor with Florida Emergency Operations Center
  - c. Liaison/monitor FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)
  - d. Liaison with FDLE, Highway Patrol, Marine Patrol, National guard
  - e. Liaison with American Red Cross & Salvation Army

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2. Provide Technical Assistance from Tallahassee Operations Center
  - a. link sister centers for relay of services.
  - b. locate volunteer staff from sister centers.
  - c. locate and coordinate supplies exchange
  - d. coordinate critical-case emergency relocation
  - e. Instruction/intervention for local telephone service routing
  - f. Re-routing of Statewide hotline
  - g. Intervention with officials
  - h. Crisis management/protocol consultation

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### FCADV TECHNICAL SUPPORT

- On-site pre-disaster planning
- Disaster crisis management assistance
- Critical incident staff debriefing (linkage and/or FCADV staffed)
- Re-occupation assistance
- Emergency staffing
- Site assessments

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### Severe Weather Evacuation

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### Severe Weather Evacuation

**Purpose:**

Minimization of the potential for human injury and facility damage and promote the continuation of client services in the event of a forced shelter evacuation.

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**Key Priorities:**

1. Emergency services of domestic violence centers must continue, even if via alternate methods.
2. Outreach clients should be notified of the interruption of services and a potential re-opening date.

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The evacuation of a domestic violence shelter during a natural disaster may affect the method, timeliness, and quality of services.



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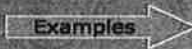
**Shelter and Hotline Coverage.**

Emergency services that must continue  
*(Specifics of how to handle hotline is covered later)*



**Court programs, outreach counseling & advocacy, community-based programs.**

- survivors' needs must not be overlooked
- cancellations must be communicated



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**Public Service Announcement  
(Sample)**

"Safety House has announced a temporary change in some services. The 24 hour hotline will remain active during this evacuation. If you or someone you know needs emergency domestic violence shelter, please call 911. The local domestic violence shelter will continue to assist anyone needing a safe place to go. The counseling offices are closed and all counseling and support services will resume after the storm/fire."

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**Voice-mail Message  
Example:**

"This is Safety House. We are temporarily closed due to Hurricane Rowdy. If you have an emergency please call 911. If you need to speak with a counselor, call our hotline at 555-1234. We plan to re-open this office the first working day after the crisis has passed. Thank you."

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**Place notices on the doors of all  
outreach offices.**

A crisis for a battered woman and a crisis for the community may be interpreted at different levels

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Have the messages spoken and printed in all languages commonly spoken in your area

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### Emergencies

**Key Points.**

1. The evacuation *is* an emergency action of the center. It should be the immediate priority.

2. Evacuation takes priority over all center services except more pressing emergencies.

† Medical, fire, or police emergencies are exceptions.

† Client hotline calls should be considered as emergencies.

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3. Plan ahead with knowledge of client medical conditions and special needs.

4. Plan ahead with the knowledge of batterer profiles. If there is an active stalker, "hunter", or lethal batterer, specific protocols should be in place.

5. Plan how survivors & staff can get emergency messages in & out.  
(See confidentiality section below)

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## Hotline

*The center hotline must be in continuous operation & answered "live".*

- ✓ *As long as hotline staff are occupying the hotline site, it should be answered.*
- ✓ *Recording devices or answering services should not be substituted.*
- ✓ *Should phone service be interrupted, the phone company should be notified to re-route lines to appropriate location*

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*2. The hotline may be forwarded to an alternate location during the community emergency, such as:*

- ✓ *Staff homes on a land-line as long as confidentiality can be assured*
- ✓ *Sister domestic violence center*
- ✓ *Cellular phone as a last option due to FM radio frequency over-rides, police scanner pick-up, and other confidentiality concerns.*

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*3. The statewide toll-free hotline number 1-800-500-1119 must be re-routed, also..*

- ✓ *Remember that the statewide dv hotline dialed from your area rings to your number.*

*It will not be automatically re-routed, therefore you must contact FCADV to have it rerouted to another number you provide or to a sister shelter.*

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## Evacuation Locations.

Centers are encouraged to consider evacuation to a location that is known to be safer.

- ☐ disaster shelters within the area
  
- ☐ facilities located safely away from the danger zone.

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✓ Residents should be alerted of the evacuation as early as possible. This will give them a chance to think about risks & options.

✓ Steps should be taken to assure privacy throughout the evacuation period. *(more later on this)*

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*1. Client safety should be foremost in decisions about evacuation sites. Each survivor's case should be evaluated individually.*

- ✓ *Determine who may potentially be occupying the shelter with the survivors.*
  - *the batterer,*
  - *extended family, friends,*
  - *others who may alert the batterer.*
- ✓ *Develop a safety plan for anyone who believes the location to be risky.*

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- ✓ *On a map, pinpoint the location of the evacuation shelter. In addition, for those who do not understand maps, identify some landmarks that may be described to the survivors.*
- ✓ *Ask survivors if the location poses a problem. Ask specific questions about the batterer's (and others) proximity to the location.*
- ✓ *Develop a relationship with the local 211-Help Line center to ease community coordination.*

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- 2. Red Cross or other public shelters**  
*(privacy)*
- a private "wing" or separate room within the evacuation shelter should be negotiated
  - the wing/room should have an entrance that cannot be easily viewed by the other evacuees
  - the restroom/bathing and eating areas should be separate from the other evacuees
  - a private smoking area should be identified (in most shelters, it is only allowed outside and poses a privacy problem)

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- Other Issues Regarding Evacuation to Public Shelters**
- staff should, if possible, remain with survivors 24 hours a day, just like at the dv center shelter.
  - phone contact with the hotline should be easy and confidential
  - survivors should have access to a phone
  - staff should take extra everything: food, games, diapers/formula, treats,

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- staff should be rotated as much as possible
- contact from the administrative staff/supervisors into the shelter will enhance spirits
- taking/sending "surprises" will be appreciated
- be prepared for emotional reactions: be sure staff are prepared for intense emotions & behaviors

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### Safety in a Public Shelter

- A. All Red Cross shelters and most other public shelters have security guards.
- B. The person in charge of the shelter should be asked to introduce you to the guards (if there are rotations, ask to meet each shift). The charge staff will give you increased credibility.
- C. Remind staff about confidentiality issues, as guards may inquire about batterers.

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- E. Unless there is a lethality issue that lends reason for an immediate need to save a life or unless the survivor feels a need to advise police no briefing of law enforcement about specific cases should be released. Also, remember that you still need a signed release form from the participant.
- E. HOWEVER-- you should advise law enforcement that you have covered safety issues prior to evacuation and safety plans are in place.

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*\*\* If a batterer is known to be actively lethal, staff should assist the survivor in deciding*

Discuss with survivors the following:

- ✓ notify staff (or the guard) immediately if the batterer or one of his allies is seen
- ✓ depending on the building, agree on general security measures (get group input)
- ✓ the temporary shelter will have the same safety precautions as the DV shelter i.e. locked doors (as permitted --\*\* if power is out, a guard should be requested)
- ✓ children should be watched more closely, especially outdoors

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- ✓ travel away from and returning to the shelter should be done with caution (*use sign-out*)
- ✓ when checking on the safety of family, friends and belongings, remember to keep their location confidential
- ✓ should interactions occur with the non-center population of the disaster shelter, refrain from disclosing the name of the agency or other identifying information

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*Centers may evacuate to a sister domestic violence center that is not within the evacuation zone.*

1. FCADV will assist in identifying the most appropriate location and can save you some phone calls!
2. If possible, supplies should be sent, as well:
  - ✓ food, water, other beverages, ice
  - ✓ bedding, pillows
  - ✓ plastic cups, spoons, forks, knives

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- 3. Take all active residents files and keep them in a locked box:
  - demographics
  - next of kin
- 4. Make sure residents take all medications
- 5. Encourage everyone to take most important belongings
- 6. Take resource guides/materials
- 7. Assist survivors in becoming familiar

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- 8. Provide staff, as needed:
  - ✓ if the hotline is forwarded to the same center, the evacuated staff may be able to provide seamless assistance by knowing the geography, resources and other vital information needed by the callers
  - ✓ having familiar staff on-hand may ease anxiety of the evacuated residents, especially children

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- Clients not wishing to evacuate with other residents should be offered shelter after the evacuation is over.*
- ✓ Just because they chose to return home during the crisis does not mean they changed their minds about leaving the batterer Nor does it mean they were not in danger.
  - ✓ Survivors should not be punished for returning to protect their belongings or help the batterer do that.

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- Those returning home (or somewhere else) should be advised as to how they may re-enter the center after the crisis
- Since some may change their minds, it is important to let them know re-entry is an option, but not a requirement for future assistance
- Several numbers/methods of contact should be given in case the hotline is not in service i.e. using police advocates, Red Cross personnel, to relay messages

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- ### What about staff???
- ☛ Staff must have time to deal with their emergency, too
  - ☛ It is advisable to get staff volunteers for coverage and extended duty
  - ☛ If this is not possible, have them negotiate with one another
  - ☛ Create "short shifts" and over-lap assignments. Allow staff to combine personal errands (without residents)

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- ☛ Be flexible regarding staff time-off to deal with issues of family, pets, property
- ☛ Accept non-enlisted volunteers
- ☛ Issue a PSA requesting former staff & volunteers' help
- ☛ Scale-down or flex services and normal operating procedures

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- ☛ Communicate clearly all plans and expectations
- ☛ Post a hypothetical calendar of work schedules for the month (so regardless of how long an evacuation takes place, staff will clearly know when to work)
- ☛ Get emergency contact information from staff. Include 2-3 different phone numbers

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- ☛ Set a time after the end of evacuation that the office will expect to re-open (as permitted)
- ☛ Set up a phone-tree system that sets staff up to call or contact to confirm their safety
- ☛ Set a meeting time/date at the County Emergency Operations center I.e. Noon the day after the emergency is declared to be over (or, in event of fire, after the shelter's zone is re-opened)

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- ### Emergency Operations Center EOC
- ☛ Set-up your own "emergency operations center" for emergency communications supplies and tracking of information
    - assign specific staff to track up-to-the minute status on the disaster
    - assign someone to track staff availability and status

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-- assign someone in charge of evacuation

-- assign someone in charge of client services

-- assign someone in charge of supplies  
(including charging re-chargeable  
batteries)

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**Develop a Plan for Re-occupation**

**Guidelines to assure safety of the facility:**

-- detailing how to approach a damaged facility

-- when, how and to whom a building inspection should be requested

-- staff assignments for re-supply and clean-up

-- protocols for client services during extended vacancy of the facility

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