

# **EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION (ESF) #19 SPECIAL NEEDS**

Primary Agency: Wilson County Emergency Management Agency  
Support Agencies: Area Hospitals  
Wilson Area Transit Agencies  
Wilson County Emergency Medical Service Providers  
Wilson County Dept. of Social Services  
Wilson County Department of Public Health

## **I. INTRODUCTION:**

- A. Scope: ESF 19 includes the entire spectrum of special needs transportation, sheltering and care.
- B. Purpose: The purpose of this ESF is to delineate procedures for the identification, recording, transportation, sheltering and care of persons requiring special needs in anticipation of, or during an emergency or a disaster.

## **II. POLICIES:**

- A. ESF 19 will be implemented upon the Emergency Management Director or designee's request for assistance prior to or following a disaster.
- B. ESF 19 activities will be coordinated through the EOC as required and will provide staff at the EOC on a 24-hour basis, for the duration of ESF 19 activation.
- C. Resources required that are beyond local and state capability will be coordinated through ESF 19. All state responses to an event must be requested by and are subordinate to the county ESF 19 operations.
- D. It is understood that a response that exceeds local resources is a state response through mutual aid, and clear lines of communication and integration of expectations will be established on a routine basis with the NC Emergency Management Agency and the State EOC.
- E. ESF 19 personnel will not release confidential information to the general public. Shelter occupant information will be handled in accordance with hospital inquiry procedures.

### III. SITUATION:

#### A. Disaster Condition:

1. Sudden Catastrophes: Transportation accidents, airplane crashes, flash floods, tornadoes, fires, or technological events may necessitate immediate requirements to special needs evacuees involved in the disaster and its aftermath. Currently, Wilson County has no facilities available that are suitable to shelter medically fragile individuals. This may need to be coordinated through long term care facilities..
2. Slowly Developing Disasters: Catastrophic disasters such as hurricanes and slow-rising floods provide warning and time to evacuate, but may cause extended displacement and damage to the infrastructure. Out-of-area shelters may be required to accommodate long-term evacuations of the special needs population.

### IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS:

Special needs are defined as any person requiring assistance with some facet of daily living and/or under the care or charge of others, either on a full or part-time basis. This definition goes beyond health-related or medical applications and applies to those who require unusual or enhanced evacuation and sheltering assistance and a level of care beyond that available at a Red Cross shelter. Under this definition there are several categories that are based on types of services involved:

#### A. Hospitals and care facilities

1. Licensed inpatient healthcare facilities in Wilson County are required to have emergency and disaster plans that address preparedness and response to local threats. Where specified and agreed upon in their plans or by separate letters of agreement, local, State and/or Federal Governments may assist prior to an event. Recovery assistance may be provided to the degree necessary. Furthermore to the degree that they remain operational following a storm, and as appropriate to their routine function, care facilities will be expected to provide for the medical needs of the community.
2. The degree of shutdown operations and evacuation of facilities for any given event will depend on the survivability and policy of each institution. However as a general rule, care facilities will be expected to cancel elective surgery, discharge patients for whom care would not be compromised, transfer patients who could be moved to safer facilities and make special arrangements for those patients whose condition will not allow transfer or evacuation. Psychiatric and mental health facilities will be expected to transfer their patients and staff to safer locations.

3. Care facilities are expected to have evacuation and/or care plans for those patients who are receiving home health care through the Department of Public Health or other home care providers.
4. Health care facilities remaining operational during event conditions will not be designated as public shelters and will only be expected to provide emergency care to the degree possible. They will be provided with law enforcement officers and amateur radio operators to assist them as necessary and available. Other emergency assistance will be provided upon request and availability.

**B. Nursing Homes/ Assisted Care Facilities:**

1. Nursing homes, personal care homes, assisted living facilities and related licensed facilities are required to have emergency and disaster plans appropriate for hurricane conditions. As a rule they are expected to transfer their residents to a safer and similar facility if they are located in a mandatory evacuation area. Due to the lead time requirements for transporting patients or residents, these facilities should be prepared to evacuate prior to Mandatory evacuation orders.
2. Nursing Homes must contract with commercial transportation vendors well in advance of conditions requiring evacuation. Because Board Of Education school busses are by design, not appropriate for this type transport, they will not be used so long as any other alternatives are available.
3. As Wilson County does not have resources to support mass patient horizontal transport, nursing home and care facility operators must make special arrangements to fulfill their requirements for this transport service. Similar arrangements must also be made by each facility to accommodate the transport of their equipment and supplies.
4. These facilities must be prepared to evacuate immediately following the issuance of a Hurricane Watch or Voluntary evacuation order for their location. Due to the complexities of evacuating these members of our population, additional time will be required and delays may create a shortage of transportation resources as well as increased traffic delays.

**C. Other Residence Based Assistance Programs:**

1. Licensed or tax supported mass homeless shelters, specialized homeless shelters, in-residence treatment programs and certain non-

residence assistance programs are required, to have hurricane plans similar to those already described.

2. Transportation assistance will also require prior contractual arrangements. Several programs have the means to transport their residents and clients without assistance. However residents and clients will need to be assembled at designated pickup points and ready for transport immediately following the issue of Mandatory evacuation orders. Facilities must make special arrangements in advance for persons requiring horizontal transport.

#### D. Home Care:

1. For persons residing at home who require transportation, a higher level of medical care than offered in a public shelter and do not have anyone to provide the care needed, evacuation and sheltering assistance will be provided to the degree that resources permit.
2. County personnel are working to develop and maintain a Special Needs Registry for citizens in this category. When implemented, immediately following a Hurricane Watch and activation of the EOC, registrants will be contacted regarding their status and will be informed to begin preparations for evacuation if and when Warning and voluntary or mandatory evacuation orders are issued. Once evacuation is imminent, they will be re-contacted and instructed to be prepared to evacuate. They will be expected to have extra clothing, medical equipment, supplies and medicines to go with them. If they have a personal caregiver such as a family member, that person will be expected to be ready and accompany them.
3. When horizontal transport is required Wilson County EMS Providers will utilize ambulances if crews are available to do so. This will be dependent upon EMS call volume at the time and prevailing conditions.
4. Evacuees will receive on-site triage for a determination of whether their needs can be satisfactorily met in a public shelter, if they require admission to a hospital, or if they should be placed in a Special Needs setting as originally registered. They will then be taken to the appropriate facility. Unregistered call-ins will be triaged in the same fashion.
5. Because Wilson County does not have designated Special Needs facilities, citizens requiring Special Needs assistance may need to be transported to another county. Care givers will be required to accompany them.

E. Correctional Facilities: The correctional facilities within Wilson County are required to have plans for hurricanes and should be self-sufficient during a storm. Assistance will be provided to them as available.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES:

With the assistance of designated Support Agencies, this ESF is the responsibility of the Wilson County Emergency Management Agency. Additional Support Agencies are encouraged and may be used as required.

(27 March 2012)