

Study: Counties lack shelter space

Major hurricanes remain a threat

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE — Nearly every Florida county lacks adequate shelter space to handle the number of people who would have to flee a major hurricane.

Sixty of the state's 67 counties have shortages of space in buildings built to withstand storms with winds in excess of 130 mph, according to a study by the state's Division of Emergency Management.

In some of the state's most heavily populated areas, as many as 100,000 people might have to go somewhere else to find shelter or seek refuge in buildings that might not withstand the storm, according to the study.

Many local emergency officials say the state dramatically overstates how

many shelter spaces are needed. Even so, many also acknowledge they don't have enough shelters to house everyone who might seek refuge.

"We know if it's a bad Category 4 or Category 5 coming in, we're toast," said John Wilson, Lee County's emergency management director.

South Florida's Broward County and the Tampa area's Hillsborough County have the most dramatic shortages. Both have about 100,000 fewer spaces than they would need if there is a big hurricane.

Officials in many counties say the state overestimates how many people would actually seek public shelters — a number put at anywhere from 15 to 50 percent of residents in evacuated areas.

County officials point to Hurricane Floyd in 1999 — a huge storm that menaced the Atlantic coast but never made landfall in Florida. More than 2 million people evacuated coastal areas but only 87,000 — less than 5 percent — stayed in shelters.

HURRICANE SHELTER SPACE ESTIMATES

- The first column is the state's estimate of the number of people who would be vulnerable to a Category 4 or 5 storm, including those who would be in a storm surge area and anyone in a mobile home.
- The second column is the state's estimate for how many of those people would likely seek public shelter. Many county officials dispute those numbers.
- The third column is the county's number of shelter spaces in buildings that can stand up to Category 4 or 5 hurricane winds. Some more spaces may have come on line since the study was prepared in January.
- The fourth column is the deficit, or in a few cases the surplus, of spaces.

County	Vulnerable	Est. Demand	Capacity	Surplus/ (Deficit)
■ Pasco	218,768	59,502	7,598	(51,904)
■ Marion	87,346	26,757	8,272	(18,485)
■ Citrus	86,546	14,207	0	(14,207)
■ Hernando	92,222	16,516	4,253	(12,263)
■ Sumter	26,834	7,245	904	(6,341)
■ Levy	27,813	4,923	0	(4,923)
■ Lake	102,155	15,279	20,610	5,331

Source: Florida Division of Emergency Management 2002 Statewide Emergency Shelter Plan.

Tobacco smoke chemicals have the power to kill

JAMES GRANDPRE
Special to the Chronicle

Secondhand smoke is a mixture of smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe or cigar and the smoke exhaled from the lungs of smokers. Secondhand smoke is estimated to cause 3,000 lung cancers annually, and 35,000 heart disease deaths in non-smokers each year, according to the American Medical Association.

Children are especially susceptible: Their lungs are still developing, and childhood exposure to secondhand smoke results in decreased lung function.

Children who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to develop asthma, the leading serious chronic childhood disease in the U.S.

Each year, according to the U.S. Surgeon General, smoking around children is responsible for:

- 20,000 children hospitalized.
- Exacerbates asthmatic symptoms in 1.6 million children in the U.S.

Children are especially susceptible: Their lungs are still developing, and childhood exposure to second-hand smoke results in decreased lung function.

■ 300,000 to 360,000 lung infections, such as bronchitis and pneumonia in children.

■ 40 percent of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) due to mothers smoking during and/or after pregnancy, or another person

smoking in the house.

■ Increases middle-ear infections.

■ Impedes proper lung development.

■ Increased risk of serious respiratory tract infections.

The World Health Organization estimates nearly 700 million children, or almost half of the world's children, breathe air polluted by secondhand smoke. The children have no choice in the matter as, they are unable to protest or protect themselves.

Children's rights violated

Countries failing to protect their children from smoke-filled environments are contributing to the violation of children's rights. Fifty percent of children younger than 6 live in a home with at least one adult smoker.

A child spending only one hour in a smoke-filled vehicle may be exposed to as much dimethylnitrosamine (a very potent carcinogen), as if he or she had actually smoked 17 to 35 filter-tip cigarettes.

During a recent World Health Organization conference on children's environmental health, leaders of the G-8 countries brought



CARL STEELFOX/Chronicle Illustration

According to the World Health Organization, there are more than 4,000 chemicals in cigarettes, 50 of which can cause cancer. The chemicals pose a danger to smokers and their children.

together experts to examine the effects of Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) on child health, and to recommend interventions to reduce these harmful effects.

Conference conclusions

The conference concluded that ETS is a real and substantial threat to child health, causing death and suffering throughout the world.

Health Science has concluded that ETS exposure causes a wide variety of adverse health effects in children, including lower-respiratory tract infections, such as pneumonia and bronchitis, coughing and wheezing, asthma, middle ear disease, cardiovascular disease, cancer and neurobehavioural impairment.

In addition, the consultation noted other well-documented health effects, including reduced birth weight, decreased lung function and slower childhood growth.

The WHO conference report advises that the evidence of this health hazard to children is consistent and robust.

Given that more than 1.2 billion adults smoke worldwide, around

- **4-aminobiphenyl** — Promotes liver/bladder cancer.
- **Ethyl 2-furoate** — A liver-poison chemical warfare agent.
- **Hydrogen cyanide** — A poison that kills cilia in lungs.
- **Arsenic** — A poison used to kill rats.
- **Carbon monoxide** — Replaces oxygen in red blood cells.
- **Formaldehyde** — Used to pre-

serve dead bodies.

- **Ammonia** — An irritant and poison.
- **Nickel** — An organ-specific carcinogen.
- **Naphthylamine** — A bladder carcinogen.
- **Toluidine** — A bladder carcinogen.
- **Benzene** — An industrial solvent.

Source: World Health Organization

700 million — or about half the world's children — breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke, particularly at home.

Parents can help

Substantial benefits to children would arise if parents stopped smoking. When compared to children of non-smokers, children of smokers perform more poorly in school.

They also have lower scores in cognitive functioning tests — in par-

ticular, language and auditory processing — and have more behavioural problems, including conduct disorders, hyperactivity and decreased attention spans.

The tobacco industry has deliberately misrepresented the extent of the harms of passive smoking, and has undertaken a campaign to discredit the scientific findings and confuse the public. Yet the evidence brought together in a number of

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experts' reports demonstrates an overwhelming scientific consensus about the health risks to children from involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke.

There's good news

The good news is that parents can take action to protect their children from second-hand smoke.

EPA Administrator Christie Whitman recently unveiled a new environmental health campaign, the Smoke-Free Home Pledge initiative, designed to protect the millions of America's children from the risks of passive smoke

in their homes.

Pledge not to smoke

The pledge is simply choosing not to smoke, and not letting anyone smoke, in your home, or anywhere children are present.

Hot line established

EPA has established a smoke-free hot line, (800) 513-1157, to take pledges from parents and reinforce their commitment with a certificate and supporting materials.

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