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FLORIDA CABINET APPROVES STATEWIDE EMERGENCY SHELTER PLAN
~ 23 Florida counties now have a surplus of shelter space ~

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Cabinet today approved the 2006 Statewide Emergency Shelter Plan. Since 1999, state, federal and local agencies have created 851,471 shelter spaces – approximately 80% of the state’s shelter demand. In 2000, Governor Bush championed legislation to provide an annual allocation of $3 million from the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund to increase shelter space. Today, Florida can provide shelter to 824,707 people in general public shelters and 26,764 in special needs shelters.

“Thanks to the ongoing commitment of the Florida Legislature, we have significantly increased our capacity to provide safe shelter to our citizens during a disaster,” said Governor Bush. “Ensuring adequate shelter capacity is part of our ongoing commitment to instilling a culture of preparedness. With more than three months remaining in the 2006 Hurricane Season, I strongly urge all Floridians to continue preparing their homes and families.”

Every two years, the Division of Emergency Management (DEM) updates Florida’s local and regional planning guide for the construction of new public schools, community colleges and university facilities to meet the Florida Department of Education’s Public Shelter Design Criteria. The five-year plan details requirements to establish safe public shelter spaces to serve Florida’s growing population and eliminate the state’s shelter deficit.

The 2006 Statewide Emergency Shelter Plan highlights new capacity development through a combination of retrofitting existing schools and public facilities and enhanced hurricane-resistant construction for new schools. To date, 23 Florida counties now have a shelter surplus, including Brevard, Broward, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hendry, Holmes Indian River, Lake, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Manatee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Osceola, Palm Beach, Saint Johns, Saint Lucie, Seminole, Taylor, Union, Walton and Washington. Additionally, four Regional Planning Council Regions demonstrate a...
surplus of shelter space, including the Apalachee, East Central Florida, Treasure Coast and South Florida regions. Florida is on track to eliminate the statewide deficit by 2011.

In June 2006, Governor Bush signed legislation providing more than $50 million dollars to install permanent generators in designated special-needs shelters. Additionally, the Legislature this year provided $15 million to expand the capacity of public shelters in Florida. When combined with the annual allocation of $3 million in the budget, the funding will add space for an additional 150,000 people. This additional funding will expedite the elimination of Florida’s shelter deficit.

As Florida’s population continues to grow, it is estimated that from 2006 to 2011, nearly 800,000 new residents will reside in areas vulnerable to the effects of major hurricanes, with approximately 15 percent seeking safety in public shelters during hurricanes.

“We are committed to working together with our colleagues at the Department of Education and local school boards to ensure the continued success of this vital program,” said Division of Emergency Management Director Craig Fugate. “The elimination of Florida’s shelter deficit will make our communities more disaster-resistant and protect our most vulnerable residents.”

For more information about the 2006 Statewide Emergency Shelter Plan, please visit www.FloridaDisaster.org or www.myflorida.com.

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