



COUNTY OF LAKE  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
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### Letter from the Director: Emergency Sheltering During Covid-19

**Lake County, Ca (August 6, 2020) –**

If you live in Lake County, I am certain that the possibility of wildfires, public safety power shutoffs or other emergencies are probably on your mind. As I look out my office window now, I can see plumes of smoke coming from the mountains north of the county. We know that between now and the first welcome rains, a disaster could happen at any time. As the Director of Lake County Department of Social Services, I am responsible for coordinating shelters when they are needed. It likely comes as no surprise that evacuations and sheltering will look different under COVID-19, making advance preparation and flexibility even more important than ever.

First, I would like to emphasize that although California's statewide COVID-19 stay-at-home order remains in effect, you should follow an evacuation order regardless of whether you have COVID-19 or believe that you may have been exposed to COVID-19. We are implementing new practices to keep you as safe as possible during your sheltering experience. Perhaps most importantly, we will insist that all community members wear a face covering at all shelter related sites.

Before going further with what you can expect this year, I want to remind everyone of the basics. Take the time to protect your home from fire by clearing away brush and tall grass from around your house and property. Clean out your rain gutters and make sure there is no flammable material near your house. As you know, these steps will reduce the chances of your home catching fire.

Next, prepare your "go bag" today. You'll need enough supplies to sustain you and your family for at least three to five days. This is a critical step in preparing your family for emergencies. Consider packing the following items based on your unique needs: food and water, important documents, cash or credit/debit cards, medication, personal hygiene items (deodorant, a toothbrush, clean clothing, tissues), face coverings for every member of your family, infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, hand sanitizer and pet food.

And finally, have an evacuation plan for you and your loved ones. This year, State mandated safety requirements are going to limit the number of people the County can shelter. Our shelters will have roughly a third of the capacity they have had in previous years. If you can seek shelter with family or friends, or at another location, we urge you to do so. Congregate sheltering should be the last resort for those who truly have no other option.

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So what will change this year? An important addition to the protocol will be Temporary Evacuation Points or TEPs. The sites will be designated when an evacuation warning or order is issued. A TEP is a safe receiving site (a parking lot or County park) where COVID-19 screening and shelter assignment will be conducted. At the temporary evacuation point, you must wear a face covering and keep six feet of distance from any non-household members. We are asking that if possible, all family members stay in your vehicle to reduce contact with others. Screening will occur while you and your family remain in your car. Expect to be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and exposure by qualified personnel. Where you are directed to shelter will depend on whether you are COVID-19 positive or symptomatic, in a high-risk or vulnerable category for COVID-19 exposure or suitable for placement in a general congregate shelter. As in years past, we are working with Lake County Transit and county schools to assist in evacuating those citizens without vehicles.

If congregate shelters are necessary, shelter operators will staff them with trained COVID-19 response personnel and implement all possible sanitation and distancing measures. Anyone identified as COVID-19 positive or symptomatic will not be sheltered with other community members in a congregate shelter. This year there will be a hard line on not allowing animals into the shelters unless you have a trained service animal. There will be shade and kennels available for small animals but you will be responsible for walking and maintaining the comfort of your pet during the sheltering event.

So, in closing, prepare in advance, follow the guidance you receive at the time of an evacuation order and above all, stay safe!



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