



# New Jersey Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness **NEWS**

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**New Jersey Developing Comprehensive  
Special Needs Registry for Emergencies and Disasters**

— Pilot Program Getting Underway in Monmouth, Ocean, Atlantic and Cape May Counties —

**HAMILTON** — New Jersey is developing a comprehensive registry for citizens who would need extra help during an emergency evacuation or other disaster situation, Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP) Director Richard L. Cañas and State Police Superintendent Col. Rick Fuentes announced today. The project is designed to build upon and enhance the counties' existing individual special needs registries, the officials said.

“We have started this registry as a pilot project with the coastal counties of Monmouth, Ocean, Atlantic and Cape May — the counties which face the highest risk from hurricanes, and are most likely to face situations that require evacuating or sheltering portions of their populations,” Cañas said.

“This pilot represents a natural expansion of the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management’s (NJOEM’s) work with county and local agencies to help enhance regional evacuation and sheltering plans,” said Fuentes, who also serves as State Director of Emergency Management.

The officials said that the project’s goals are to:

- Increase special needs awareness and planning by engaging community stakeholders;
- Register individuals with special needs in a comprehensive regional manner;
- Improve planning for disasters and for implementing evacuations and sheltering when disasters occur.

The project, which OHSP is funding and NJOEM is managing, is in its initial stages, Cañas and Fuentes said. The first steps, which are currently underway, involve carrying out a demographic study in the four counties to identify comprehensively their special needs populations. In addition, all existing planning documents for dealing with special needs populations will be reviewed and analyzed for any gaps that need to be filled in a regional plan. Next steps include developing a communications outreach plan both to inform special needs populations of the registry and getting these populations to register. Finally, the project calls for measuring regional shelter capabilities, given the ultimate number of persons who register under the project.

The project is being coordinated for NJOEM and OHSP by Delta Development Group, of Mechanicsburg, Pa., a consulting group hired through competitive bidding. Jerry McAteer, Delta’s project leader, testified on Monday about the registry before the Assembly’s Coastal New Jersey Evacuation Task Force at a hearing in Egg Harbor Township, Atlantic County.

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