

V. CONCLUSION

The State of Florida recognizes the necessity of providing safe hurricane evacuation shelter space for its residents during disasters. Hurricane Andrew (1992) made the need clear and the Lewis Commission Report following Hurricane Floyd (1999) concurred. The State remains steadfast in its commitment to provide safe hurricane evacuation shelter space to all during a disaster. Through funding of the recommended *2017 Shelter Retrofit Report* projects, Florida will continue to see improvements in shelter capacity.

Since 1995 hurricane evacuation shelter spaces have been identified, or created through retrofitting of existing buildings or through new construction. In the past year, some hurricane shelter buildings have been decommissioned due to new storm surge mapping, age, remodeling or reuse that is incompatible with mass care shelter operations, deterioration or removal of window protection products or other reasons. Changes in storm hazard maps (e.g., SLOSH, national flood insurance, etc.) also affect a site's ability to meet hurricane safety criteria. Therefore, the *2017 Shelter Retrofit Report* of available and currently funded retrofit capacity is 1,083,354 spaces.

In 2015, an additional provision, Sec. 252.355 Florida Statutes, established new requirements for special needs registries under county emergency managers. Although shelters for persons with special needs have been available, the additional statutory provision increased demand because physicians are encouraged to register their patients. Additionally, digital marketing is required for the registry. In 2016, changes in evacuation studies and demographics increased the demand for shelters for persons with special needs. Special needs shelters require more space per client and additional physical accommodations than general population shelters. Consequently, they are more expensive to retrofit, the funding is restricted regarding which items can be retrofit, and the spaces generated per dollar invested are fewer. As a result, two-thirds of Florida's counties have a special needs deficit in the 2016 SESP.

An additional 65,303 spaces would be created if the projects in this report are funded, resulting in 1,148,657 spaces available to be used for risk hurricane evacuation shelters. Some projects could receive greater funding for special needs retrofitting, reducing overall spaces but providing safe haven for Florida's most vulnerable population. Demand for general population shelters increased in FY 2016-2017 to 962,012. By contrast, the demand for hurricane evacuation shelter spaces in the 2000 SESP was 1,776,606.

In 2017 two (2) regions of the state still report a deficit of hurricane evacuation shelter space. Regions that currently have an adequate number of hurricane evacuation shelter spaces will need to maintain their inventory. In 2017, 37,966 spaces in previously recognized hurricane evacuation shelters were decommissioned and removed from inventory. Over time, additional hurricane evacuation shelters will be decommissioned due to age and other issues. Additional changes in storm hazard maps (e.g., SLOSH, national flood insurance maps, etc.) could affect a facilities' recognition of meeting hurricane safety criteria. Thus, even though the aggregate statewide deficit is reduced in the *2017 Shelter Retrofit Report*, a "maintenance level" of shelter space production will be necessary to avoid falling back into a deficit situation.