

Public wary of hurricane evacuations

20 July 2006

A survey of people in eight U.S. states vulnerable to hurricanes suggests people are wary of seeking safety in designated hurricane shelters.

Harvard School of Public Health researchers surveyed people in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas. They found 33 percent of residents said if government officials ordered them to evacuate due to a major hurricane this year, they would not or are unsure if they would leave.

The top reasons people give for not evacuating involve safety and security. The Harvard researchers found 68 percent of those surveyed said their home is well-built and they would be safe. Fifty-four percent said roads would be too crowded, 36 percent said evacuating would be dangerous, and 31 percent said they feared their possessions would be stolen or damaged.

"It will be a challenge for public officials to convince many of these people to leave their homes..." said Harvard Professor Robert Blendon. "In addition, most of those who plan on staying believe they would be rescued if they needed to be."

The survey, involving 2,029 adults, has a margin of error of 4.4 percentage points.

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