

Hurricane Evacuation Support Guide



Naval Air Station
Meridian, Mississippi

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Guide to Hurricane Evacuation Support is to describe the support NAS Meridian (NASMER) may be requested to provide to other military organizations during hurricane season.

This guide will assist military installations requesting support during one or more of the four phases of emergency management. Actions are required to mitigate the effects of a hurricane, to prepare for measures taken to preserve life and minimize damage, to respond during emergencies and to implement recovery operations.

This guide primarily falls within the preparedness phase (actions that focus on planning). Procedures are described to assist coastal military installations with supporting actions to allow them to maintain continuity of operations and to support their personnel who evacuate to NAS Meridian (NASMER).

2. REFERENCES

NASMERINST 3440.2 “Hurricane Evacuation”
CNI 3440.17 “Emergency Management Program”

3. SITUATION

NASMER is geographically well suited to assist military installations in the event evacuation is mandated. NASMER is located in northern Lauderdale County, Mississippi, approximately 18 miles northeast of the city of Meridian. Thoroughfares serving NASMER include Highway 39, 3.5 miles to the West, Highway 45, 6 miles to the Southeast and Interstate 20/59, 15 miles to the south.

4. GENERAL

NASMER receives numerous inquiries each spring from military installations located near the Gulf of Mexico. Many request guarantees of support for equipment storage and for billeting personnel and dependents. Guarantees of support obviously cannot be made to every organization/installation requesting assistance, and as such NAS Meridian’s general policy will be to support on a “first come, first serve” basis. Each unit that may evacuate to NASMER can assist the command by pre-identifying advance teams who can provide NASMER with current information as to the personnel expected to evacuate to the station.

Installations indicating NASMER as an evacuation site are required to conduct an annual site visit. This will ensure that the NASMER Emergency Management department has updated requirements and POCs. It is valuable for installations to familiarize themselves with Naval Air Station Meridian to assist advance teams with receiving personnel/equipment/aircraft. Again, it is imperative to understand listing NASMER as an “evacuation site” or “safe haven” does not imply that NASMER can guarantee support. Unless a MOA has been accomplished stating such, requestors need to understand a last minute change in storm direction, or a base more in line with the expected path, may take priority over their request. Additionally, due to the unpredictability of the storm track, decisions on which bases get priority will likely come later than earlier.

5. POLICY

All units responding to NASMER will be supported on a “first-come, first serve” basis.

Following the approval to proceed to NASMER and completion of the required notification procedures, two or three representatives and an advance team from each installation may proceed to NASMER to provide support to NASMER and their respected unit during the evacuation.

This advance team will provide information to evacuees from their installation and assist the NASMER Emergency Management department with coordination actions prior to evacuation, and tracking personnel accountability when evacuation is ordered.

Phone and fax services are located within the Hurricane Evacuation Reception Center and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Point security for equipment, aircraft, boats, etc., is the responsibility of the evacuating organization. The NASMER Naval Security Force is not staffed to perform point security for evacuated assets.

NASMER will not assume liability for government or personal items brought by evacuees.

6. NOTIFICATION

Once the potential exists for imminent evacuation and the support requirement is identified, the organization must forward a request for support. Initial phone contact shall be to:

NASMER Emergency Management Officer (EMO)

- 601-679-3407 (Office)
- 637-3407 (DSN)
- 601-604-1839 (Cell)

Requestor will provide contact information to the EMO

The NASMER EMO will need detailed information such as:

- Total number of personnel evacuating
 - Number of Single or Geo-Bachelors
 - Number of Families and their sizes
- Total number of dogs and cats evacuating
- Any extra vehicles or equipment evacuating

Upon receipt of request, the NASMER EMO will notify the NASMER Executive Officer. Following phone contact, requester should email requirements and contact information to:

- bryon.garrison@navy.mil

7. INITIAL ACTIONS

NASMER EMO will:

1. Pass request to NASMER Executive Officer to coordinate supporting actions.
2. Develop recommendations for NASMER Commanding Officer approval.
3. Return response to requestor.

8. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Weather: During the last 17 years NASMER was directly impacted with hurricane-force winds during Katrina in 2005 and on multiple occasions with destructive-force winds from multiple Tropical Storm and various

thunderstorm systems. Winds during Katrina reached over 74 mph, causing well documented damage through the lower 2/3s of the state of Mississippi, while winds associated with thunderstorms pushing through the area have reached 85 mph. Bottom line: While severe weather is possible at and around NASMER, the installation typically will not evacuate under these circumstances.

First Come, First Serve Policy: As noted above Naval Air Station Meridian has a first-come, first-serve policy. NAS Meridian Emergency Management personnel closely monitor hurricanes and know which installations are in the path. We encourage these installations to notify us of the requirements as soon as possible.

Cell Phone Availability: Service may be limited, if available at all.

Personal Weapons: Evacuees are encouraged to not bring personal weapons to NAS Meridian. However, if brought DD Form 2760, Qualification to Possess Firearms or Ammunition must be completed along with Enclosure 5, NAS Meridian Firearms Registration. Background checks will be ran on both the person bringing weapons on board and each individual weapon.

9. OTHER SUPPORT

Relief Agencies: Due to location, NASMER becomes a prime site for pre-positioning critical relief supplies for the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other relief agencies. These, along with mission-essential military operations generally operate concurrently during hurricanes.

Shelters: Shelters will be activated and coordinated for both personnel and (separately) pets IAW applicable Installation instructions. Evacuees should evacuate with supplies shown in enclosures A and B and have the forms in enclosures C and E completed prior to arrival.

Accountability: All evacuees will be processed through the Evacuation Reception Center inside Pass & Tag, Building 221, located at the Main Gate entrance, John C Stennis Drive. Personnel accountability is critical in evacuation situations. Evacuees are also required to out process through the same Evacuation Reception Center when leaving NAS Meridian.

10. PLANNING RESOURCES (ENCLOSURES)

1. Supply kit requirements for personnel evacuation
2. Supply kit requirements for pet evacuation
3. Pet Registration Form
4. Directions to Naval Air Station Meridian via I-59/20 and Hwy 45 or Hwy 39
5. NAS Meridian Evacuee Registration Record
6. NAS Meridian Firearms Registration

11. INSTALLATION ACCESS

Upon arrival at NASMER evacuees will be able to reach the Evacuation Reception Center before entering into the installation, however ID cards will be required.

12. IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

1. Security / Fire / Ambulance
 - i. Emergencies
 - 1) On base dial 911
NOTE: Must be dialed from a land line phone. If dialed from a cell phone you will reach Lauderdale County 911 and not the Navy Base.
 - ii. Non-Emergencies (or to contact from off base)
 - 1) 601-679-2361
 - 2) 601-679-2958
2. Navy Marine Relief Society: 601-679-2504
3. Branch Medical Clinic
 - i. Appointments: 1-877-879-1621
 - ii. Tri-Care Service Center (inside clinic): 1-800-444-5445
 - iii. Pharmacy: 601-679-2243
 - iv. Pharmacy Fax: 601-679-2973
 - v. Medical: 601-679-2633
 - vi. Dental: 601-679-2383
 - 1) Emergencies:
 - a) DWH: 601-679-2682/2383 - AWH: 601-679-2633/2891
 - vii. Monday – Friday 7 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Saturday/Sunday & Holidays Closed
 - viii. Afterhours: 601-679-2633
4. Public Works Emergency Service
 - i. DWH: 601-679-2755
 - ii. AWH: 601-679-2151
5. Fleet and Family Support Center (DWH): 601-679-2358/2360
6. Local Civilian Medical Facilities
 - i. Jeff Anderson Regional Medical
2124 14th Street, Meridian, MS 39301
601-553-6000
 - ii. Riley Memorial Hospital
1102 21st Avenue, Meridian, MS 39301
601-693-2511
 - iii. Rush Foundation Hospital
1314 19th Avenue, Meridian, MS 39301
601-483-0011

13. OTHER CONTACT NUMBERS

1. FEMA: 1-866-877-6075
2. American Red Cross: 1-866-438-4636
3. MEMA: 1-800-222-6362
4. MS Hwy Safety Patrol: 601-987-1212 (*hp from any cellphone)
5. Alabama DOT: 1-334-242-6358
6. Alabama Hwy Patrol: 1-334-242-4371
7. Louisiana DOTD: 1-877-452-3683
8. Louisiana State Police: 1-800-469-4828
9. Florida DOT: 1-866-374-3368

14. MORALE, WELFARE & RECREATION FACILITIES

1. Fitness Center

- i. 601-679-2379/2367/3384
- ii. April – September
 - 1) Monday-Friday: 5:30 a.m.-8 p.m.
 - 2) Saturday, Sunday & Holidays: 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
- iii. October – March
 - 1) Monday-Friday: 5:30 a.m.-9 p.m.
 - 2) Saturday, Sunday & Holidays: 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

2. McCain Lanes Recreation Center (Bowling Alley)

- i. 601-679-2651
- ii. Monday-Thursday: 11 a.m.-10 p.m.
Friday & Saturday: 11 a.m.-11 p.m.
Sunday & Holidays: 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

3. Ponta Creek Golf Course

- i. 601-679-2526
- ii. Daily: 7 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

4. Liberty Center (Library)

- i. 601-679-2623
- ii. Monday - Friday: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.
Labor Day: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

5. Recreation Center (Rudders)

- i. 601-679-2636
- ii. Sundays & Monday: Closed

Tuesday - Thursday: 4:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Friday & Saturday: 4:30 p.m. - 11 p.m.

15. NAVY EXCHANGE FACILITIES

1. Main Store/Uniform Shop

i. 601-679-2665

ii. All Days: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

2. Barber Shop/Beauty Shop

i. 601-679-2641

ii. All Days: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

3. Electronics/Mini Mart

i. 601-679-2568

ii. Monday-Friday: 7 a.m.-9 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.

4. Gas Station

i. 601-679-2664

ii. Attendant on duty:

Monday-Saturday: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Closed Sunday

(Gasoline can be purchased with credit cards 24 hours per day.)

5. FOR INFORMATION ABOUT EXTENDED HOURS AT NEX FACILITIES PLEASE CALL
601-679-3414

16. CHAPEL SERVICES

1. 601-679-3635

2. All Faiths Sunday Service: 9:30 a.m.

Catholic Mass: Sunday at 5 p.m.

Wednesday Prayer Lunch: 11:15 a.m.

17. POST OFFICE

1. 601-679-2580

2. Monday-Friday: 10 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

18. NAVY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

1. Located in the Administration Complex, Building 255

2. 1-888-842-6328

3. ATM located at the Navy Exchange Complex

19. PLACES TO EAT ON BASE

1. MEAN GENE'S (Located inside McCain Recreation Center (Bowling Alley))
 - i. 601-679-3388
 - ii. Monday-Thursday: 10 a.m.-9:00 p.m.
Friday-Saturday: 10 a.m.-10:00 p.m.
Sunday/Holidays: 10 a.m.-9:00 p.m.
2. SAND TRAP (Located at Ponta Creek Golf Course)
 - i. 601-679-2780
 - ii. Monday-Friday: 7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Saturday, Sunday and Holidays: 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
3. MOM'S DINER (Located near McCain Field)
 - i. 601-679-2531
 - ii. Monday-Friday: 6:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Saturday/Sunday/Holidays: Closed
4. ROY M. WHEAT GALLEY (Located corner of Fuller and Higley)
 - i. Breakfast: 5:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
Lunch: 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Supper: 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.
 - ii. Saturdays, Sundays & Holidays Only
Breakfast: 6:00 a.m. -7:00 a.m.

20. OFF BASE ACTIVITIES

1. Check with ITT (601-679-3773), located in McCain Recreation Center (Bowling Alley), for off-base places of interest and possible discount tickets.
2. Check with Lauderdale County Tourism at 601-482-8001 for information about other off base activities.
3. MSU Riley Center (Show/Concert Theatre)
 - i. 601-696-2200
 - ii. 2200 5th Street
4. Bonita Lakes Mall (Movie Theater)
 - i. 601-485-5009
5. Skate Odyssey
 - i. 601-483-9654
 - ii. 3435 North Hills

6. Dixie Bowl
 - i. 601-483-2283
 - ii. 3510 North Hills
7. Bonita Lakes Park
 - i. City owned 3,300 acre park that features nature trails, jogging and walking track, horseback riding trails, picnic facilities, paddle boats, boat ramps and fishing. Free and open year round 7 a.m.-10 p.m. Bonita Lakes is located just south of Meridian on Highway 19 South.
8. Planet Playground
 - i. A 10,000-square foot playground built totally by volunteers. It's free and fun for the whole family. It is located between NAS and Meridian just off Hwy. 39 on Newell Rd.
9. Splashdown Country
 - i. Water park sits on 350 acres of land on Lake Okatibbee. Managed by the Pat Harrison Waterway District, it features two waterslides, inner tube river ride, children's pool with small slide, playground and picnic area. Open 12 p.m.-5 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday; open 12 p.m.-6 p.m. Saturday & Sunday, June-Labor Day. Info: 601-737-2370.
10. Dentzel Carousel
 - i. On the National Register of Historic Places and the Department of the Interior list of National Landmarks, the carousel arrived in Meridian in 1909 and has occupied its same location in Highland Park. Its house is the only remaining original carousel building built from a Dentzel blueprint. The carousel is open daily from 1-5 p.m. in June, July and August; for other times, call 601-485-1904 or 601-485-1802. Directions: From I-20/59, take 22nd Avenue exit; turn left on 8th Street; follow signs to the Jimmie Rodgers Museum in Highland Park or take Exit 150, turn right on 8th Street; follow signs to Highland Park.

PERSONNEL EVACUATION SUPPLY KIT ITEMS

Food

- Non-perishable food and drinks
- Manual can-opener
- Vitamins
- High energy foods – peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix

Comfort/stress foods

- Cookies, hard
- Candy, sweetened cereals
- Foods for infants, elderly persons
- Foods for individuals on special diets

Supplies

- Cell phone(s) and charger(s)
- Pre-paid phone cards
- Battery operated radio
- Flashlight & extra batteries
- Road maps
- Cash, credit cards, traveler's checks, change
- Complete First Aid Kit
- Extra set of car keys
- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates & plastic utensils

Special Items

For Children:

- Formula/infant food
- Diapers
- Powered milk
- Bottles
- Medications
- Baby wipes
- Take a favorite toy or book for each child to help them feel more secure in a stressful setting

For Adults:

- Personal medications & prescriptions
- Extra eyeglasses, sunglasses
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Denture needs
- Cards, books, small games

Miscellaneous

- Sanitary Supplies
- Toilet Paper
- Towelettes
- Personal hygiene items
- Feminine supplies
- Soap, liquid detergent
- Plastic garbage bags
- Disinfectant
- Bath towels / washcloths

Clothing & Bedding

- One complete change of clothing & footwear per person
- Blankets, pillows, sleeping bag, cots, sheets, pillow cases, bath linen, etc...
- Wet weather clothing
- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Hat and gloves

Important Family Documents

- Wills, deeds, stocks & bonds
- Insurance policies
- Bank account & credit card numbers
- Inventory of valuable household goods
- Passports
- Social security cards
- Immunization records
- Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)
- Important phone numbers

Personnel evacuating to installation shelters must plan to bring either cots or air mattresses for all family members – NASMER has some cots, but inventory is not sufficient to issue cots to all evacuating personnel.

Evacuating personnel are encouraged to NOT bring personal firearms. If, however, personal firearms are brought to NASMER, the Naval Security Force will require firearms be turned over and stored in the armory.

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EVACUATING WITH PETS

Pets will not be allowed in Bachelor Housing lodging. However, the Security department provides an area for billeting of you pets. Owners must have proof of up-to-date vaccines on hand in order for pets to be allowed on base. A list of required vaccinations is included below. Please note that NASMER does not have a veterinarian on base, however there are many veterinary businesses in the surrounding area including the cities of Meridian and De Kalb. Personnel bringing pets must bring a disaster supply kit including, but not limited to the following:

- Vaccination information - Food - Medications
- Carrier - Special toys - Blankets or other “soft” bedding
- Litter (for cats)

Owners are responsible for feeding and cleaning up after their pets. No exotic animals (ferrets, rabbits, snakes, birds, rats, mice, etc.) will be boarded on base. Boarding vaccination requirements prior to boarding the animals on base or in town are:

Dogs:

7 in 1 (Seven disease shot)-annual
Bordet Ella Nasagard (Kennel Cough) - annual
Rabies vaccination-provided as an annual or 3 year shot

Cats:

4 in 1 (four diseases shot)-annual
Feline leukemia vaccination-annual
FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis Similar to dog's kennel cough)-annual
Rabies vaccination-provided as an annual or 3 year shot

Local Veterinary / Boarding Facilities

Adams Animal Hospital	Hwy 45 & Hwy 39N	601-483-1411
Critter Sitter Boarding Kennel	8884 Hwy 19N	601-626-0088
Dogs Day Inn (Dogs Only)	2115 Wilkerson Loop	601-483-2115
Meridian Animal Clinic	4516 8th St.	601-482-5159
Pampered Pets (small dogs, no cats)	11510 Suqualena Rd.	601-626-7888
Pet Priority Boarding Kennel	170 Dees Rd.	601-483-4001
Pet Services	5010-A Poplar Springs Dr.	601-693-3940
Poplar Springs Animal Hospital	4915 Poplar Springs Dr.	601-693-7333
Precious Paws	6389-A Hwy 19N	601-693-6068
Seal Laird Vet Hospital	2319 Hwy 19N	601-482-3125
Till Newell Animal Hospital	2200 Hwy 45N	601-485-8049

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OWNERS: Please complete one form for each pet. The form will be attached to the pet's kennel.
 Owners are responsible for feeding, watering and general care of their pets, to include clean-up.
 Pets are required to be on a leash when owners are walking them.

NAS MERIDIAN PET REGISTRATION RECORD

Sponsor Information

Last Name		First Name		MI	Last 5 SSN
Command		Contact Phone 1		Contact Phone 2	

Home Address

Street Address		City		State	Zip
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Pet Information

Pet Type	Pet Name	Pet Description		ID #
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NAS MERIDIAN PET REGISTRATION RECORD

Sponsor Information

Last Name		First Name		MI	Last 5 SSN
Command		Contact Phone 1		Contact Phone 2	

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Pet Information

Pet Type	Pet Name	Pet Description		ID #
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NAS MERIDIAN PET REGISTRATION RECORD

Sponsor Information

Last Name		First Name		MI	Last 5 SSN
Command		Contact Phone 1		Contact Phone 2	

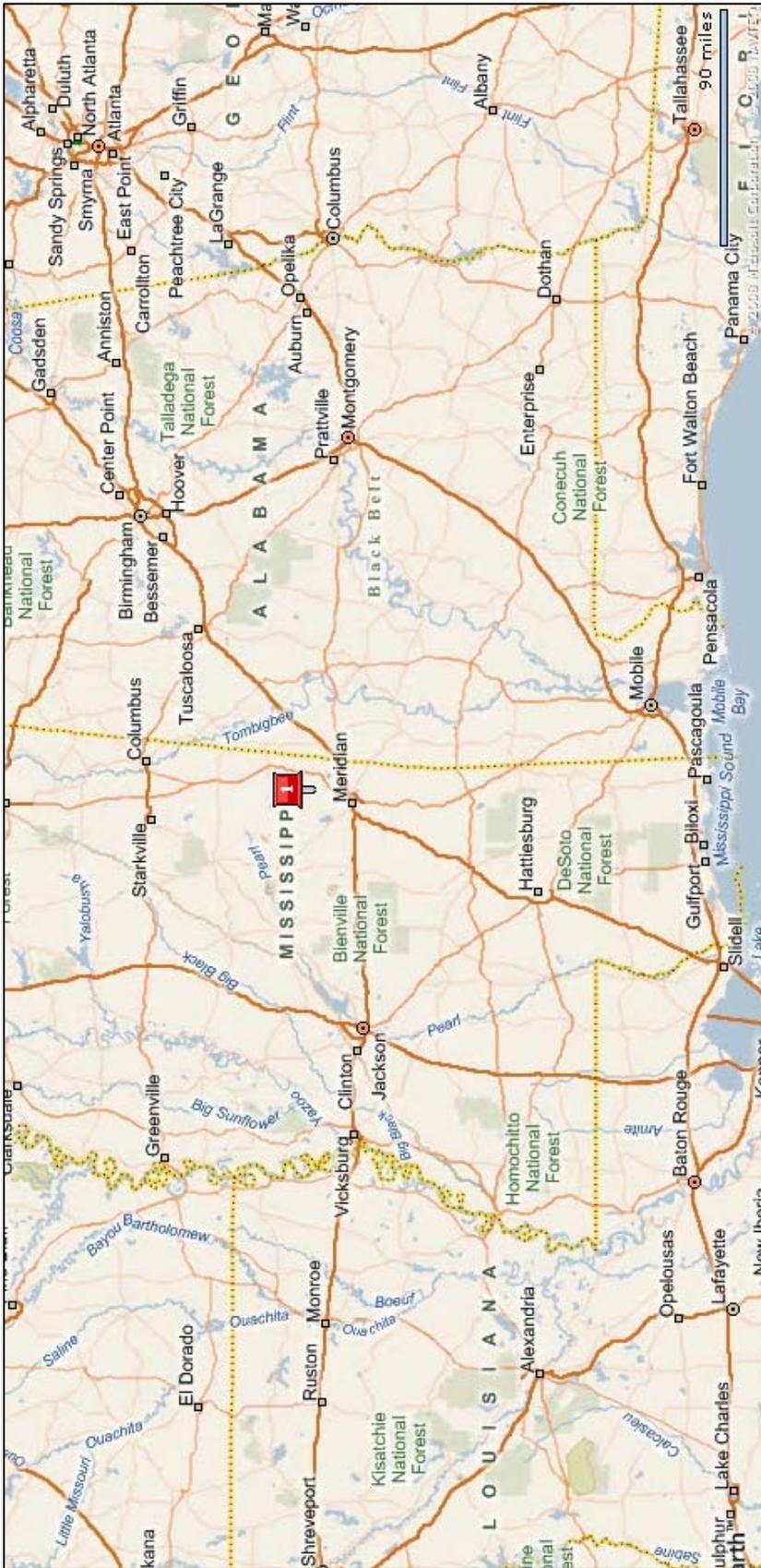
Home Address

Street Address		City		State	Zip
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Pet Information

Pet Type	Pet Name	Pet Description		ID #
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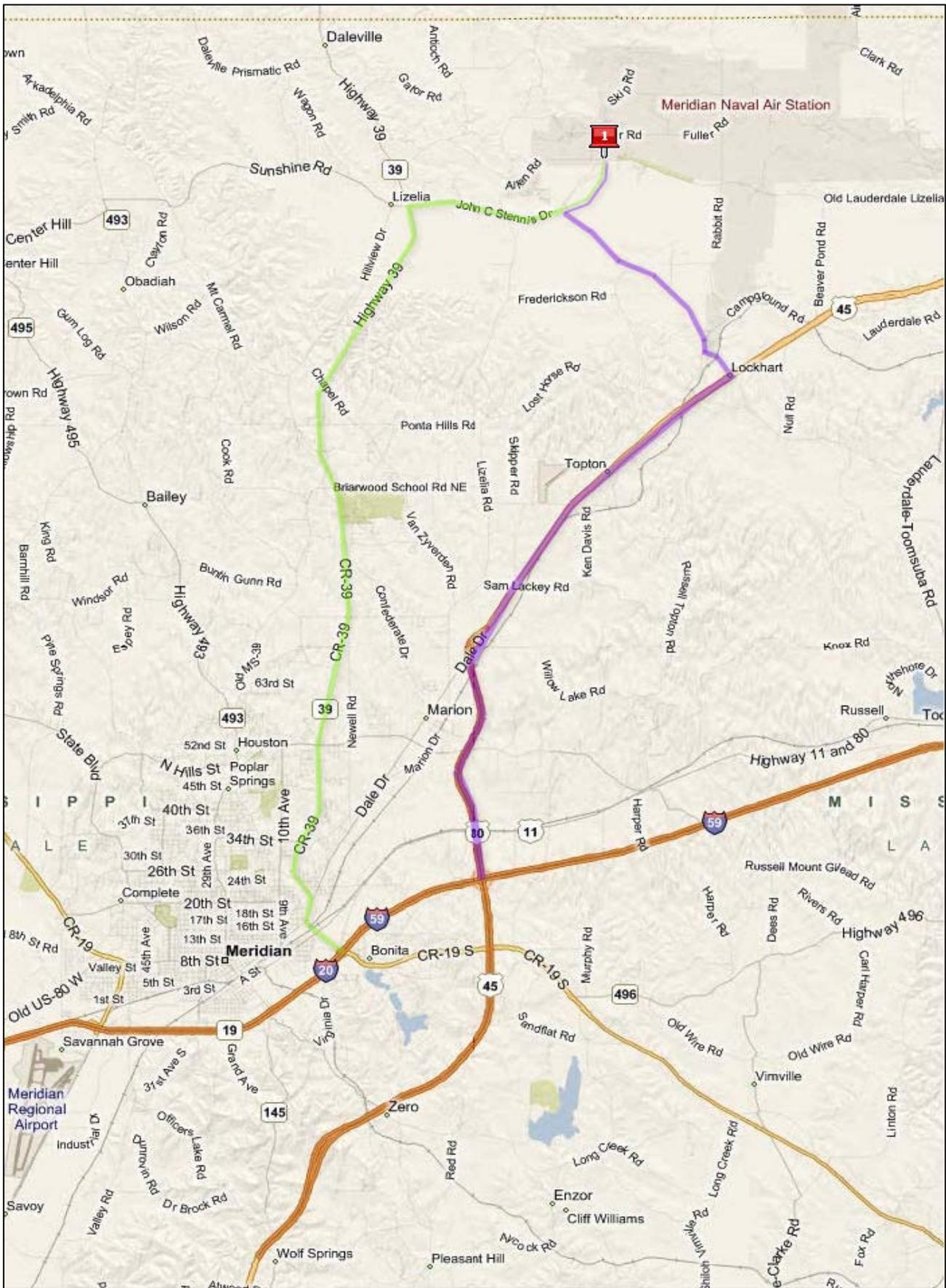
 Location of NAS Meridian, Mississippi

Figure 1

NAS Meridian may be accessed north of Interstate 20/59 via Hwy 45 or Hwy 39.

Expect extremely heavy traffic. Depending upon the size of the storm and the evacuating force, southbound lands of I-59 and other north-south thoroughfares may be reversed.

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1 NASMER Main Gate at John C Stennis Drive

Figure 2

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Directions to NAS Meridian for use with Figure 2

From I-20/59 via Highway 39*

Highlighted in Green

- Take Exit 154A (from the West)
 - Exit 154 (from the East)
- Head North toward De Kalb
- Follow Highway 39 North for 12.5 miles to John C Stennis Drive.
- Turn Right onto John C Stennis Drive
- Proceed 3.5 miles to Naval Air Station Meridian

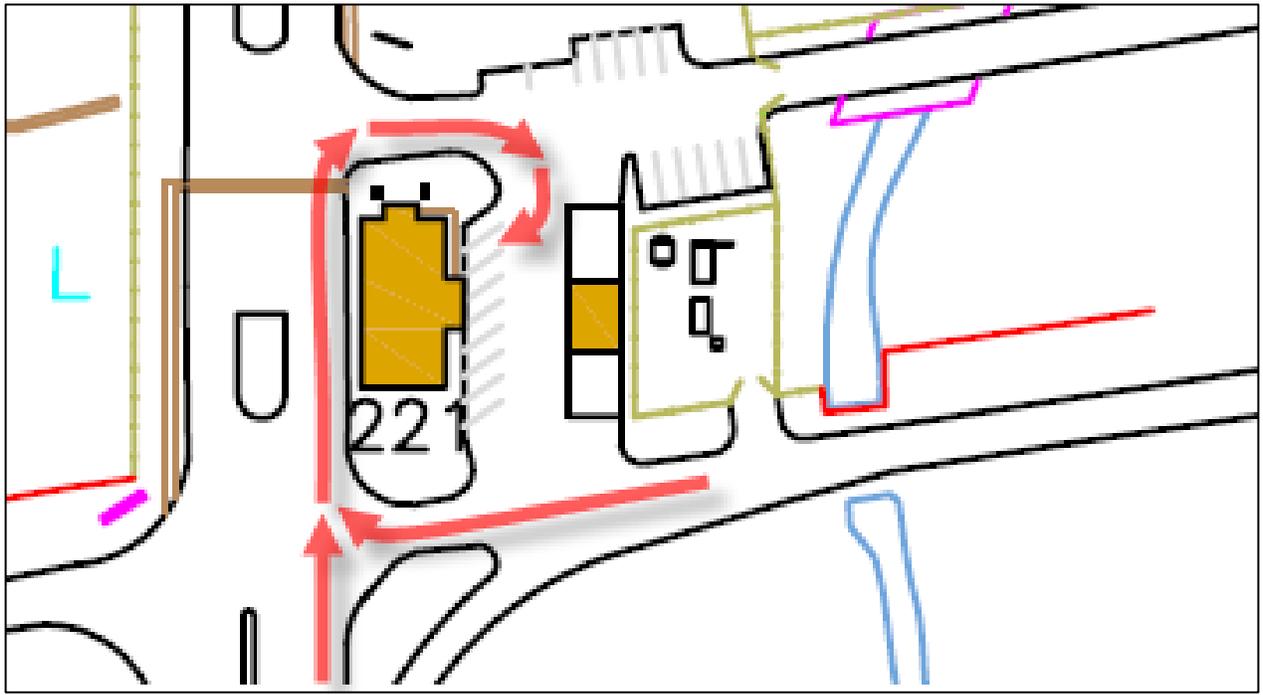
From I-20/59 via Highway 45*

Highlighted in Purple

- Take Exit 157B
- Proceed 9 Miles to Campground Road
- Turn Left onto Campground Road
- Proceed 4 Miles to John C Stennis Drive
- Turn Right onto John C Stennis Drive
- Proceed 1 mile to Naval Air Station Meridian

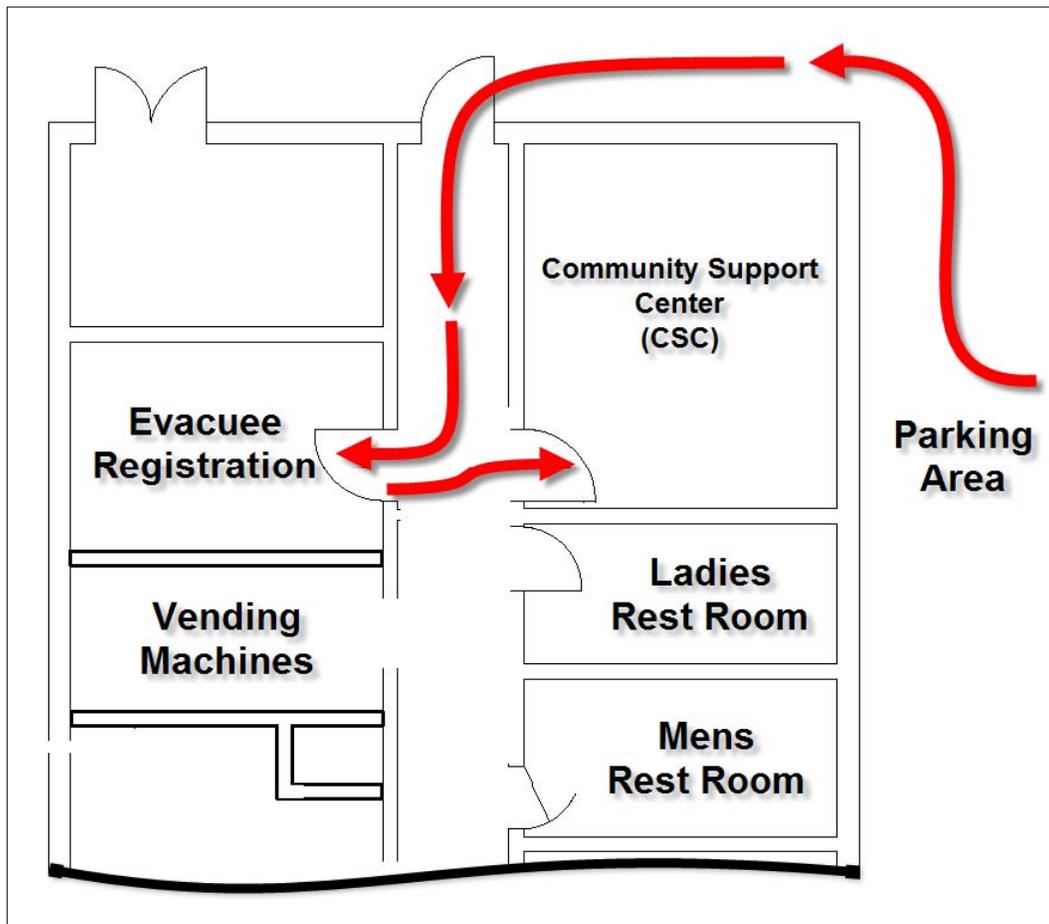
*All distances Approximate

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Traffic Pattern at the Pass & Tag Office

Figure 3



Registration location and flow at the Pass & Tag Office

Figure 4

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NAS MERIDIAN FIREARMS REGISTRATION

Name (last, first, mi)	Rate/Rank	SSN	Organization/Duty Station/Duty Phone
Home Address / Phone		Check Appropriate Box <input type="checkbox"/> NAS Housing <input type="checkbox"/> CBQ <input type="checkbox"/> OFF BASE	

Firearm No.	Type (shotgun, rifle, bb, etc.)	Make	Caliber	Serial Number
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				

When transporting a firearm on base, it/they shall be carried unloaded and contained in a closed and locked case, gun box, securely tied package, and locked in the trunk of the vehicle or separate compartment permanently affixed to the vehicle. If ammunition is transported in the same vehicle as a firearm it shall be stored in the vehicle away from the firearm in a separate container or vehicle compartment. Once approved a copy of this registration form should accompany any firearm while being transported on base. Transportation of privately owned weapons/ammunition on station must be by the most direct route to or between the authorized storage site and the authorized usage area, range, hunting area, or gate. When returning to the base with a registered firearm it must be declared to the sentry on duty.

All firearms kept by residents of housing will be stored in a location accessible only to adult residents. In accordance with NASMERINST 3593.1 all firearms (less air, carbon dioxide, BB, rubber band and spring guns) must be equipped and stored with a trigger lock which renders the firearm inoperable until removed. Waivers for trigger locks while stored in vaults/safes will be granted on a case by case basis after inspection and approval by the Security Officer. Request for waivers must be submitted in writing to the Security Officer, and approvals must be maintained in the safes/vaults. All firearms kept by housing residents must be unloaded at all times. **Housing guest will not be allowed to register weapons and must store weapons in the armory at bldg 222.**

I certify that I have read the above requirements and will comply with them.

Signature of applicant / date

This registration is not valid unless stamped by the Security Department.

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MERIDIAN AND SURROUNDING AREA

Meridian, which lies 15 miles southwest of the naval air station, is a progressive and rapidly growing city.

When pressed for a one-word description of the city, natives and visitors alike would probably choose "friendly." Others describe Meridian as "beautiful," "accessible" and "a good place to raise a family."

Centrally located in the Southeast, Meridian is 155 miles southwest of Birmingham, Alabama; 90 miles east of Jackson, Mississippi; 247 miles northeast of New Orleans, Louisiana; and 180 miles north of Pensacola, Florida.

Airline, bus and train services are available. Modern highways criss-cross the rolling countryside, leading to major surrounding cities and numerous recreation and historical sites.

Many industries have chosen the area as home because of the strategic location for transportation purposes and excellent local labor force. Major categories of manufacturing are wood, metal fabrication, electronic equipment, aircraft parts, insulation board, furniture, paper and print products.

The City of Meridian is home for approximately 40,000 people. Many homes are located on rolling terrain, graced by native pines and hardwoods. There are a variety of local housing choices with reasonable rental rates and purchase prices. Numerous motels serve the many visitors and newcomers.

The Meridian Public School (MPS) District is the twelfth largest in the State of Mississippi. MPS serves more than 6,700 students in grades K - 12. The Lauderdale County School District provides educational opportunities for approximately 6,500 students. The Meridian area is also served by several private/parochial/Christian schools.

Opportunities in higher education are offered on the Meridian Community College (MCC) campus. The fully accredited college offers both day and night courses. In addition, a degree-granting campus of Mississippi State University is located next door to MCC, enabling students to take third and fourth year college courses or earn a master's degree.

The Grand Opera House MSU-Riley Performing Arts Center renovations should be completed in 2006, when a grand opening celebration is planned.

With three general care hospitals serving the area, Meridian is a medical center for all of eastern Mississippi and western Alabama. There also is a mental health clinic, a hearing and speech clinic and a state mental hospital.

There are over 200 churches representing 40 denominations located in the city. Lauderdale County and the surrounding area are served by a daily newspaper, The Meridian Star, and several weekly community papers.

Cable television facilities are available, and there are numerous local radio and TV stations.



United Artist Theaters at Bonita Lakes Mall provides first-run feature films on numerous screens with state-of-the-art sound.

Meridian has a large chapter of the Navy League of the United States, which is responsible for awarding scholarships to Meridian Community College to deserving dependents of enlisted (active duty or retired) personnel or NJROTC cadets. They also present the annual "Flight Instructor of the Year" and "Military Citizen of the Year" awards. The "Golden Stick" award, sponsored by the Meridian Area Navy League and local businesses and individuals, is presented to the top student naval aviator in each winging class.

The local entertainment and art scene offers exceptional opportunities not often found in a town of Meridian's size. The Meridian Little Theatre presents four plays each season. Many military personnel have appeared on stage or worked behind the scenes; newcomers are always welcome.

Local musicians and singers combine their talents to form the 65-piece Meridian Symphony Orchestra and the Meridian Symphony Chorus.

The Meridian Art Museum is open year round and features local and area artists. Amusements and tourist attractions in the area cater to both the young and the "young at heart."

Annually Meridian hosts the State Games of Mississippi which brings almost 4,000 amateur athletes to town for the two-weekend-long Olympic style competition.

Highland Park, home of one of only two working Dentzel carousels built in the 1890s, is the location of the Jimmie Rodgers' Museum honoring the famed "Singing Brakeman" of the 1920s often referred to as "the father of country music."

Merrehope, a beautiful restored antebellum home, and the Frank W. Williams home, a restored Victorian house circa 1886, are both open daily for tours.

First opened in 1890, The Grand Opera House of Mississippi was the most spectacular stage of its time in the South. Lauded as the South's only second-level opera house, efforts have begun to restore it to its original state.

The Sam Dale Memorial Park and monument, located in Daleville, was built to honor the famous historic Indian fighter.

The surrounding area is steeped in history. Civil War battlefields and other sites can be visited easily in a day. The Vicksburg National Military Park is 120 miles west of Meridian, and the Shiloh National Military Park lies about 200 miles to the north. Other nearby places of interest to Civil War buffs include Jefferson Davis' home, Selma, Mobile Bay and several Confederate cemeteries.

The Natchez Trace National Parkway was once an Indian path, then a wilderness road, between Natchez, Mississippi, and Nashville, Tennessee. From 1800 to 1830, it became a highway binding the old Southwest to the Union. The Natchez Trace was a vital factor in the growth of the Southeast and our nation. Today, historic markers, exhibits and trails explain why this frontier has been remembered and will help you understand its history.

Thanks to its hospitable climate, Mississippi is one of America's great "outdoor" states.

Near Meridian, there are some 4,000 acres in the upper reaches of the Lake Okatibbee reservoir area that are licensed to the Mississippi Fish and Game Commission as a game management area for public hunting. Okatibbee also provides fantastic fishing opportunities and is a boaters' paradise. Swimming, fishing, picnicking, camping -- there is nearly something for everyone at Lake Okatibbee.



Beautiful Dunn's Falls, located along the Chunky River 11 miles south of Meridian, is open daily Wednesday through Sunday. It features a 65-foot waterfall, a swimming area, trails, a gristmill, and is a great place for a picnic.

The mild temperature is reflected in the numerous open-air events held here throughout the year, which are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. A few of these include: Arts in the Park each April in Meridian, the Ralph Morgan Rodeo each April and August in Lauderdale; the Jimmie Rodgers' Music Festival each May in Meridian; Juneteenth, held on a "teenth" Saturday in June in Meridian; the Mardi Gras Block Party and Parade occurs on the weekend before Mardi Gras in Meridian; the Threefoot Art Festival on

the second Saturday of October in Meridian; the Choctaw Indian Fair, a thrilling taste of American Indian life, held in July on the Pearl River Reservation near Philadelphia; and "The World's Largest House Party," the Neshoba County Fair, also held in July in Philadelphia.

The arts and crafts fair, held in May and October in Canton, Mississippi, is another event you won't want to miss.

In addition, Mississippi offers nature trails and lovely gardens wherever you might choose to wander. Rock hounds will delight in the world's second largest petrified forest, located in Flora, Mississippi.

The East Mississippi Business Development Corporation (EMBDC), the local chamber and economic development office, provides information to newcomers as well as demographic information to prospective businesses to our area. It also supports the naval air station in many ways in addition to providing staff support for the Meridian Area Navy League. For more information, contact the EMBDC at (601) 693-1306.

For visitor information, the Lauderdale County Tourism Bureau may be reached at 1-888-868-7720.

Familiar, nostalgic, historic, unusual, relaxing or exciting -- it's all right here in Mississippi, and it's yours for the asking all year 'round.

As you can see, Meridian has much to offer, but to sum up the atmosphere in one word, it's definitely "friendly."