

Emergency Preparedness

Are You And Your Pets Prepared For An Emergency?

Emergencies come in many forms, and they may require anything from a brief absence from your home to permanent evacuation. These emergencies include natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, mudslides, wildfires, or other severe weather conditions and home and life specific emergencies such as house fires, gas leaks, illness, or hospitalization. It is important to be ready when an emergency arises because you may not have time to gather the necessary supplies. It is probable that you have put together a disaster kit for you and your human family members, but have you remembered the essentials for your furry friend? Now is the time to get those essentials that your furry friends will need. If an emergency strikes, don't get caught unprepared, be sensible, be safe, be prepared!

Before Disaster Strikes

In a major disaster or emergency you may very well be on your own for at least a few days, perhaps longer. We all must take responsibility for our own family's safety, including our pets. The best way to ensure their protection before disaster strikes is to plan ahead and be prepared. Having the essential supplies on hand prior to an emergency will greatly increase your chance of making it through an emergency successfully.

Prepare a pet emergency kit (PDF)

You may have put together a disaster kit for you and your human family members, but have you remembered the essentials for your furry friend? Whether you are away from home for a day or a week, you'll need essential supplies. Keep items in an accessible place and store them in sturdy, water-proof, containers that can be carried easily (duffle bags, covered trash containers, etc.). Your pet emergency supplies kit/Go Bag should include:

- **FOOD:** Pack the brand your pet is used to eating. When packing canned food, pack the smallest one available. Your pet's appetite may decrease during a disaster and there may not be a proper way to store partially used cans. Pack enough for a week for each pet (based on your pet's food intake) and don't forget a can opener, plastic lid, a bowl and a spoon to serve with. (Rotate packed food every 3 months to ensure freshness).
- **WATER:** Pack at least a week's worth of water for each pet. Store it in a dark or shaded area to prevent the growth of bacteria. Also include a no-spill water dish, and a small container of bleach or water purifying tablets.
- **SANITATION:** Cats-Have a week supply of scoopable litter in a jug. Include a litter box and scoop (a small plastic litter box or even a cardboard box with a bag to line it). Dogs-Have a supply of plastic bags to pick up waste.
- **CLEANING SUPPLIES:** Disinfectant for cleaning crates and litter boxes, paper towels, and dish soap for cleaning feeding bowls.

- **PET FIRST AID KIT:** Consult your veterinarian when developing the first aid kit. The following items serve only as examples of what may be included in a small animal first aid kit. Instant cold pack, scissors, tweezers, emollient cream, several pairs of disposable gloves, antiseptic wipes, cotton swabs/applicators, zinc oxide cream or tape, non-adhesive absorbent dressing, absorbent gauze roll 3", absorbent gauze 4"x4" pads, and conforming 3"x5" bandage, Benadryl in case of bee stings (ask your vet for proper dosage), and a towel or washcloth. Store items in a water tight container.
- **CRATE:** A crate is a safe place to keep your pet during the stress of a disaster. Make sure it is big enough for your pet to stand up and turn around with some extra room for water and food dishes. Include a blanket or toy for comfort. Make sure the crate has a secure locking device to prevent escaping. A plastic or collapsible crate works well, avoid cardboard carriers as they don't last long and a stressed animal can scratch their way out. Now is the time to purchase your crate so you have it and can get your pet acclimated to it before any disaster hits.
- **COLLAR & TAG:** A proper fitting collar with tag should be on your pet at all times, but pack an extra set for your pet in case the one your pet is wearing gets lost or damaged make sure your cat has a breakaway collar. Consider packing a harness and leash, yes for cats too. A harness will make it easier to let your pet exercise and get them out of their crate.
- **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Have at least 10 copies in case your pet gets lost and you need to distribute them to shelters or where you last saw your pet. Pack multiple photos, include any distinguishing marks and include a photo of you with your pet (to assist with proving ownership). Make sure to update photos if your pet is currently young. Store in a waterproof envelope.
- **HEALTH & VET INFORMATION:** Pack at least 2 weeks' worth of any necessary medications (rotate to ensure they don't expire) and include any dosing instructions. With any medications include a piece of paper with all of the contact information for your vet and for an alternative vet. Write a release note authorizing a friend or family member permission to provide treatment in case of illness or injury to your pet. Include a recent copy of vaccine and medical records, your pet's microchip information, and any health or behavior issues.
- **PROOF OF OWNERSHIP:** Include copies of pet registration, adoption papers, proof of purchase, etc. This will make it easier to reunite with your pet in the event your pet(s) becomes lost.
- **FLYERS:** Make preprinted "Lost Pet Posters," in case your pet gets lost. Include your phone number, an alternative phone number, and your home address and leave some blank lines to include any pertinent emergency information such as the last place you saw your pet, collar color or temporary emergency contact information.
- **EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST:** Prepare this list now before a disaster strikes. Include addresses and 24-hour contact numbers, if available. These contacts can be used by rescue personnel responding to a disaster affecting your animals or by you during a disaster or an evacuation.

Don't forget that your pets get frightened and stressed too. Having you close is important, but if you can't be close please consider leaving an article of your clothing or blanket with them. Your scent will help keep them more relaxed. Pack their favorite toy if they have one. A little piece of home goes a long way in keeping your pet calm, and a calm pet is easier to handle when you're dealing with any kind of disaster. Our pets are part of the family, and being prepared on their behalf is important.

Line up a place to go with pet/find people outside the area to care for your pets while you rebuild after a disaster:

- Contact hotels and motels in a 30, 60, 90 mile radius outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets and restrictions on number, size, and species. Ask if "no pet" policies could be waived in an emergency. Keep a list of "pet friendly" places, including phone numbers, with other disaster information and supplies. If you have notice of an impending disaster, call ahead for reservations.
- Make arrangements with friends or relatives. Ask people outside the immediate area if they would be able to shelter you and your pets—or just your pets—if necessary. If you have more than one pet, you may need to arrange to house them at separate locations.
- Prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency; include 24-hour phone numbers.
- Ask local animal shelters if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets in a disaster. Animal shelters may be overburdened caring for the animals they already have as well as those displaced by a disaster, so this should be your last resort.

A few more ways to prepare before a disaster

- Make arrangements well in advance for a trusted neighbor or nearby friend or family member to take your pets and meet you at a specified location. Be sure the person is comfortable with your pets and your pets are familiar with him or her. Give your emergency caretaker a key to your home and show her or him where your pets are likely to be (or hide) and where your disaster supplies are kept.
- Consider getting your pet(s) microchipped, and have ID tags with your contact information on your pet's collar so they can be identified if they become lost.
- Create a Go Bag and Pet First Aid Kit for your pet.
- Prepare a 24 hour Contact List.

When Disaster Strikes

During the emergency

- Bring your pets indoors as soon as local authorities say there is an imminent problem. Keep pets under your direct control. Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers, and make sure they are wearing identification.
- If your family and pets must wait out a storm or other disaster at home, identify a safe area of your home where you can all stay together. Be sure to close your windows and doors, stay inside, and follow the instructions from your local emergency management office.

If You Are Ordered To Evacuating

- Planning and preparation will enable you to evacuate with your pets quickly and safely. But bear in mind that animals react differently under stress. Outside your home and in the car, keep dogs securely leashed. Transport cats in carriers. Don't leave animals unattended anywhere they can run off.
- Evacuate your family, including your animals, as early as possible. By leaving early, you will decrease the chance of becoming victims of the disaster.
- Load your larger animal cages/carriers into your vehicle. These will serve as temporary housing for your animals if needed.
- Load the Pet Go Kit and Pet First Aid Kit and supplies into your vehicle.
- Call your prearranged animal evacuation site to confirm availability of space.

Worst case scenario – Leaving your pet(s) behind

If you have to evacuate your home, it is best **not** to leave your pets behind. However, if you must leave your pets behind, the following are ways to keep your pet as safe as possible:

- Post a highly visible sign (either on a window or a door) letting rescue workers know the breed and amount of animals which remain. Free Rescue Alert stickers can be ordered from the ASPCA.
- Leave plenty of food and water in an adequate container that cannot be tipped over. Place extra food close to the animals so rescue workers may feed them daily.
- Do not tie the animals or leave them confined in an area that may be easily destroyed.
- Remember to make sure that all doors and windows are secure so your pet cannot escape.

Additional Resources

For more information regarding pet emergency preparedness, and for county specific resources please visit:

WASRT - <http://www.washingtonsart.org>

HSUS - <http://www.humanesociety.org>