

Emergency Preparedness

Preparing Your Pets for Disasters

Start with knowing your community's emergency operations plan. Contact your emergency management office and identify what they have in place for both you, your family and your pets.



In October 2006, the president of the United States signed the (Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (or PETS) Act, which allows for any community to put a pet evacuation plan in place so humans can evacuate WITH their pets.

If you are evacuated, you'll want to identify where shelters are located, and (if) those human shelters have a pet-friendly shelter attached or nearby. Otherwise animals may be housed at local established animal shelters. Make sure vaccinations are up-to-date as animal welfare organizations will ask for that documentation when housing your animals.

The other key is to be prepared and have an emergency kit for your pets.

Pet Emergency Supply Kit

Food: Three days of food in an airtight, waterproof container

Water: Store at least three days of water for pets in addition to what you have for family

Medicines and Medical records: Keep an extra supply of medicines that your pet takes regularly in a waterproof container

First aid kits: Talk to your vet about what is most appropriate. Kits should include cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape, scissors, antibiotic ointment, flea and tick prevention, latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol and saline solutions. Include a pet first aid reference book. (The American Red Cross also carries many kits online for purchase)

Collar with ID tag, harness or leash: Pets should wear collars with rabies, license and ID at all times. Include a backup leash, collar and ID tag in your pet's emergency supply kit.

Important documents: Include copies of your pet's registration information, adoption papers, vaccination documents and medical records in a clean plastic bag, or waterproof container. Keeping that with the pet carrier makes it easy to find in an emergency.

A crate and/or carrier: In case you need to evacuate quickly, make sure this is in an easy to access location.

Sanitation: Include pet litter and litter box, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags, pet waste bags and household chlorine bleach for your pet's sanitation needs. Use

bleach as a disinfectant (dilute with nine parts water to one part bleach) or in an emergency use the bleach to purify water. Use eight drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Stir it well and let stand for 30 minutes before using. Do not use scented or color safe bleach or those with added cleaners.

A picture of you and your pet together: If you are ever separated from your pet during a disaster, this may make it easier to help document ownership and all others to assist with identifying your pet. Include information about species, breed, age, gender, color and other distinguishing characteristics.

Familiar items: Put favorite toys, treats or bedding in your carrier. These will help reduce stress for your pet and keeping the items in the carrier will help you gather things together more quickly.

Supplies in your emergency kit should be non-perishable. Check the kit every six months to be sure medications, food and water are still good.

Emergency Animal Shelters

As you prepare for disasters, check with your Office of Emergency Management to identify emergency shelter locations and if animals will be co-located in shelters with humans. If not, determine where the animal shelter will be. That information should be broadcast on the radio shortly after the disaster occurs. The ideal situation is that your community have in place a co-located animal shelter right near the shelter for humans so you can care for your own pet.

- For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Find out which motels and hotels are in the area in which you plan to evacuate that allow pets. Include your local animal shelter's number in your list of emergency numbers. Make sure you have plans for evacuating large animals and livestock that require special trailers. Stay tuned to local radio and television on your computer, smart phone or via a car radio. Having a radio that is solar or battery powered is also an important addition to your emergency kit so you can continue to get notifications if the power goes out.

Protect Pets During a Disaster

- Bring your pets inside immediately.
- Feed animals moist or canned food so they will need less water to drink.
- Animals will often isolate themselves during severe weather. Bringing them inside early can keep them from running away. Never leave a pet outside or tied up during a storm.
- Separate dogs and cats and smaller animals. Even if your dogs and cats normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally.
- Always take your pets with you when evacuating. There have been situations where residents can't back into evacuation areas for days and even weeks. Your pet will not survive without water or food.
- If you are going to a public shelter, it is important to understand that animals may not be allowed inside. Plan in advance for shelter alternatives that will work for both you and your pets; consider loved ones or friends outside of your immediate area who would be willing to host you and your pets in an emergency and keep a list of pet-friendly motels/hotels in your disaster kit. List those outside your immediate area since those locations may also be under evacuation orders.