

Disaster Preparation for Pets

Preparing before a disaster can help keep all of your pets safe

No one wants to face a natural disaster. But this year has shown that many of us will, and it's always best to be prepared. There is lots of information available for what to do for your home, but what about your pets? Here are some tips to keep you prepared, just in case.

Identification is Critical:

- Micro-Chipping your pets is invaluable to getting a pet returned to you if they are lost. If your pet isn't chipped already, make that a priority. If your pet is chipped, have the chip checked by your veterinarian. This helps to make sure that it is reading properly and ensures that your current name and address information is on record. This is especially important if your pet was already chipped prior to your getting them.
- Check that all of your pets have collars and are wearing identification with your current contact information AND an alternate number in case you lose power or need to leave the area.
- Obtain a current copy of your pets' medical records, vaccination list and medication information from your vet for your evacuation kit. Photocopy the record – if you have time and you know weather danger is looming, consider laminating the information. Keep a copy of the records in a waterproof container – you may also want to scan it and keep it along with other important information on a USB drive as well. You can even send copies to a trusted friend in a safe area.

Have a Pet Disaster / Emergency Evacuation Kit On Hand:

- Food and water for at least 5 days in a sealed (water proof) container
- Medical information, medication list, veterinarian's name, address and phone number, vaccination record, and current photo of each pet. This information will be required to board pets and if you stay at a hotel or motel with your pet.
- Medications – Include insulin & syringes, eye or ear drops, skin creams, medicated shampoos
- Collar or harness and leash
- Carriers or crate, ideally one for each pet
- Litter and box, scoop and garbage bags in a sealed, waterproof container. You can buy disposable litter pans or make your own using disposable aluminum casserole/cooking pans.
- Waste disposal bags
- Piddle pads and pet diapers (if needed). Pads can be helpful for emergency clean up or as a surface barrier to keep your pet on a clean surface. As they absorb water, keep them in plastic zip lock bag or sealed container.
- Grooming items & first aid supplies
- Special needs items for your pets – storm shirts, coat/sweaters, toys or comfort items, etc.
- Flashlight, spare batteries / powerbanks. You may want to consider a solar charging bank, also.

Always Have a Back Up Plan.

- If you plan on sheltering in place, identify alternate evacuation locations that accept pets.
- Plan to take your pets with you if you need to evacuate. You have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area. You may not be able—or allowed—to go back for your pets. Pets left behind in a disaster can easily be injured, lost or killed.
- Identify evacuation shelters that accept pets and alternate locations for evacuation. Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to find out if they accept pets. Ask about any restrictions on number, size and species. Inquire if a "no pet" policy or pet restrictions would be waived in an emergency. Keep the information with your emergency kit.

- Call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave your home.
- Make a list of several different places in different areas and keep the information on these places with your evacuation pack (including name, address, phone number and directions).
- Consider arrangements with friends or relatives outside your immediate area if they would be able to shelter you and your pets—or just your pets—if necessary.
- Consider a kennel or veterinarian's office. Identify their vaccination requirements for boarding in advance. Make a list of boarding facilities and veterinary offices that might be able to shelter animals during disasters. Make sure to include their 24-hour telephone numbers in addition to main office numbers.

In addition to an emergency plan for times when you and your family will be on site at home, it's also wise to have an emergency plan for your pet while you are away or on vacation. Here are some things to consider:

- If you board your pet or hire a pet sitter when you travel, ask about their emergency preparedness plan. If the boarding facility must close, you need to make a plan for your pets well in advance.
- Identify an emergency caretaker for your pets. Make sure they are familiar with your pets and have access and all the necessary information.
- Always provide your pet sitter or boarding facility with the name and contact information for your authorized emergency caretaker, in case your pet needs to be picked up and sheltered while you are away.

We never want anyone to ever face a disaster. But if it happens, being prepared can mean the difference between life and death, for all of your family members. Take time now to be safe later. For more information, these sites may be useful:

- <https://www.ready.gov/animals> (Includes tips for large animals)
- <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/disaster-preparedness>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/features/petsanddisasters/index.html>
<https://www.bringfido.com/lodging/> (Pet Friendly Hotels Worldwide)

by Sharon Stapf, Southern Maryland Coordinator for Pets on Wheels, www.PetsOnWheels.org