



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR PETS

WASART Website: www.washingtonsart.org

WASART e-mail: animalresponseteam@gmail.com

Why You Need to Be Prepared

Hurricanes, floods, wildfires, hazardous material spills—disasters can strike anytime, anywhere. If you think you will never have to evacuate unless you live in a floodplain, near an earthquake fault line, or in a coastal area, you may be tragically mistaken. It is imperative that you make preparations to evacuate your family and your pets in any situation. In the event of a disaster, proper preparation will pay off with the safety of your family and pets. There are steps that you can take to be better prepared to care for your pets in a disaster.

Every member of your family should know what he or she needs to take when you evacuate. You also need to prepare supplies for your pet. Stock up on non-perishables well ahead of time, and have everything ready to go at a moment's notice. Keep everything accessible, stored in sturdy containers (duffel bags, covered trash containers, etc.) that can be carried easily.

If you reside in an area prone to certain seasonal disasters, such as flooding or hurricanes that might require evacuation, create a kit to keep in your car.

In your pet disaster kit, you should include:

- Medications and medical records stored in a waterproof container and a first aid kit. A pet first aid book is also good to include.
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and carriers to transport pets safely and to ensure that your pets can't escape. Carriers should be large enough for the animal to stand comfortably, turn around and lie down. Your pet may have to stay in the carrier for hours at a time while you are away from home. Be sure to have a secure cage with no loose objects inside it to accommodate smaller pets. These may require blankets or towels for bedding and warmth, and other special items.
- Current photos and descriptions of your pets to help others identify them in case you and your pets become separated and to prove that they are yours.
- Food and water for at least five days for each pet, bowls and a manual can opener if you are packing canned pet food.
- Information about your pets' feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and number of your veterinarian in case you have to board your pets or place them in foster care.
- Pet beds and toys, if you can easily take them, to reduce stress.

- Other useful items include newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags, grooming items and household bleach.

If You Evacuate, Take Your Pets

The single most important thing you can do to protect your pets if you evacuate is to take them with you. If it's not safe for you to stay in the disaster area, it's not safe for your pets. Animals left behind in a disaster can easily be injured, lost, or killed. Animals left inside your home can escape through storm damaged areas, such as broken windows. Animals turned loose to fend for themselves are likely to become victims of exposure, starvation, predators, contaminated food or water, or accidents. Leaving dogs tied or chained outside in a disaster is a death sentence.

If you leave, even if you think you may be gone only for a few hours, take your animals. Once you leave your home, you have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area, and you may not be able to go back for your pets.

Leave early—don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order. An unnecessary trip is far better than waiting too long to leave safely with your pets. If you wait to be evacuated by emergency officials, you may be told to leave your pets behind.

Don't Forget ID

Your pet should be wearing up-to-date identification at all times. This includes adding your current cell phone number to your pet's tag. It may also be a good idea to include the phone number of a friend or relative outside your immediate area—if your pet is lost, you'll want to provide a number on the tag that will be answered even if you're out of your home.

Find a Safe Place Ahead of Time

Because evacuation shelters generally don't accept pets, except for service animals, you must plan ahead to ensure that your family and pets will have a safe place to stay. Don't wait until disaster strikes to do your research.

Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets. Ask about any restrictions on number, size, and species. Ask if "no pet" policies would be waived in an emergency. Make a list of pet-friendly places and keep it handy. Call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave your home.

Check with friends, relatives, or others outside your immediate area. Ask if they would be able to shelter you and your animals or just your animals, if necessary. If you have more than one pet, you may have to be prepared to house them separately.

Make a list of boarding facilities and veterinary offices that might be able to shelter animals in emergencies; include 24-hour telephone numbers.

(Excerpted with permission from Humane Society of Missouri)