

PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY PET DURING A DISASTERS: A FACT SHEET FOR PET OWNERS

Pets provide family members with warmth, love, and friendship. Pets are often considered important members of a family. If a pet becomes injured or lost after a disaster, family members may become sad and worried, and this can increase the emotional strain in a family.

To help prevent your pet from getting injured or lost, families should plan for the safety of their pet before a disaster occurs.

Here are some steps to help your family make sure your family pet is safe in a disaster.

PREPARING FOR A DISASTER

- **Make sure your pet wears an ID tag.** Make sure your pet wears an updated ID tag with information such as the pet's name, address, and phone number. The ID tag can help identify the owners if the pet becomes lost after a disaster. Implantable microchips are also available for your pet and can be used to locate the pet if he or she becomes lost.
- **Develop a pet buddy system with neighbors, friends, or relatives.** A buddy system identifies someone to take care of or evacuate your pet if you are unable to do so. Make sure your pet buddy is able to get your pet if you are not available. For example, your buddy may need a spare key to your house to get your pet.
- **Place a rescue alert sticker on a window closest to your front door.** This rescue alert sticker will let first responders know that there is a pet inside of your house. This is useful in case you have to evacuate without your pets.
- **Create a pet emergency supply kit.** You should identify a safe place to keep your pet emergency supply kit before the threat of a disaster. Make sure everyone



Peerakit Jlrachetthakun / Getty Images

in the family and your pet buddy knows where your pet emergency supply kit is stored. Items a kit should include are:

- *A strong leash, harness, or carrier for each pet for transportation.*
- *Blankets or towels for pet bedding.*
- *At least a seven day supply of food and water for each pet. Consider including dry food as it stores longer than wet food. Also include treats, which may help to comfort your pet.*
- *Pet play toys and grooming equipment such as a brush. These items may help reduce your pet's stress and increase your pet's level of comfort following a disaster.*
- *Pet vaccination history, any microchip information, medications, and medical records. These items should be up to date and need to be stored in a zip lock bag or other waterproof container.*
- *A recent photo of you with your pets. This can help locate a missing pet and also prove that the pet is yours when the pet is found.*

DURING A DISASTER

- **If you evacuate your home, take your pet with you.** Don't assume that you may only be gone from your house for a short period of time. Once you leave the area, there is no telling when you will be able to return.
- **Whenever possible, evacuate early and do not wait for a mandatory evacuation.** Emergency responders may require that you leave your pet behind if you evacuate at the last minute during an emergency situation.
- **If you do not evacuate your home, make safety your top priority.** Find a safe place within your house large enough for your family and pets. Make this safe place animal friendly by providing toys, treats, other comfort items, and remove any potentially harmful poisons and toxins.



andres / Getty Images

AFTER A DISASTER

- **Don't allow your pet to explore freely around your house.** When exploring your house for any damage, put your pet on a leash or in a carrier. Allowing your pet to wander around the house could be potentially dangerous and they may be able to escape through if the house is damaged.
- **Begin to re-establish your pet's normal routine.** Behavioral problems may develop if your pets are stressed after the disaster. Re-establishing a routine can be comforting to your pet and create a sense of normalcy for your pet and for your family.
- **Be cautious of the surroundings outside of your house.** If the disaster involved flooding or a wildfire, check your property for potentially dangerous wild animals. Wild animals may have had to take refuge on your property as a result of the disaster and may be a threat to your pet.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information about protecting your family pet during a disaster is available from the following sources:

American Red Cross

www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/pet-safety

The Humane Society of the United States

www.humanesociety.org

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

www.Ready.gov/caring-animals

Out of Harm's Way

A book written by Terri Crisp that addresses helping pets, livestock, and horses during disaster.

Provides shelter and care for animals displaced by disaster: www.Redrover.org

Copyright © 2014 Seboldt BJ, Williams S, First J (Disaster and Community Crisis Center at the University of Missouri). All rights reserved. You are welcome to copy or redistribute this material in print or electronically provided the text is not modified, the authors and the Disaster and Community Crisis Center at the University of Missouri are cited in any use, and no fee is charged for copies of this publication. Unauthorized commercial publication or exploitation of this material is specifically prohibited. If you would like permission to adapt or license these materials, please contact DCC at houstonjb@missouri.edu or 573.882.3327

This work was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The views, opinions, and content are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.