

companion animal disaster planning

Hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, hazardous material spills and other disasters can strike anytime, anywhere. In the event of a disaster, proper preparation will help ensure the safety of your family and pets.

Be prepared:

Disasters can cause a lot of stress and anxiety, but being prepared can help lessen the stress and help you remain calm so you can take care of your family and pets. When preparing disaster kits for your family, make sure to prepare one for your pets, too. Your pet kit should include:

- Recent photographs of your pet
- Health and vaccination records
- Drinking water in gallon-sized plastic containers
- Pet food and dishes
- Medication(s)
- Leash, as appropriate
- Carrier or crate; a plastic or non-glass habitat should be used for transport of companion animals such as hamsters and reptiles
- List of contact numbers such as your veterinarian, a nearby shelter and emergency pet hospitals
- Hotels that accept pets
- Treats, pet bed or blankets, can opener (for canned food), pet first aid kit, toys and potty pads

Aside from the kit, it is always best to be prepared at home and in your daily lives:

- ❑ Always make sure your pet wears an ID tag, as appropriate, with your contact information on the carrier, or have your pet microchipped; if your pet inadvertently gets lost, the contact information is their ticket home
- ❑ Have at least a week's supply of food and water on hand at all times for your pets. Store the dry food in air-tight/waterproof containers
- ❑ If your pet is on long-term medication, keep a backup supply on hand
- ❑ Have a secure carrier and train your pet to be comfortable using it
- ❑ Start a buddy system with someone in your neighborhood so that they will check on your pet during a disaster in case you aren't home, agreeing to do the same for them; exchange information and have a permission slip put in your file at your veterinarian's office authorizing your friend to get necessary emergency treatment for your pet should you not be available
- ❑ Know where the animal shelters are in your area, as you may need to visit them after a disaster to look for a missing pet
- ❑ Since pets may not be permitted in Red Cross shelters, look for shelters ahead of time to make sure your pet has a place to stay
- ❑ Research 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; and make a list of pet friendly places and keep it handy
- ❑ Check with friends and relatives outside your immediate area, and ask if they would be able to shelter you and your pets, or just your pets, if necessary

- ❑ Prepare a list of contact numbers including your veterinarian and nearby shelter

If you evacuate, take your pets

The most important thing you can do to protect your pet is to take them with you when you evacuate. If you must leave your pet, then leave them in a room without windows such as a bathroom or laundry room. Make sure to provide plenty of food and water. Leave a note outside the door and outside your home in a visible spot advising the location, type of pet and your contact numbers as well as the number to your vet.

If you leave, even if you think you may be gone only for a few hours, take your pets. Once you leave, 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. If you are evacuating, leave early and don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order. An unnecessary trip is far better than waiting too long to leave safely with your pets.

While most evacuation teams will take your pets with you, don't rely on it. If your pet is not allowed at the temporary shelter, contact friends, family, veterinarians or boarding kennels to arrange for care. Make sure to supply medical and feeding information, food and medicine with your pet. If you cannot return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Most boarding kennels, veterinarians and animal shelters will need your pet's medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current.

If you don't evacuate

- ❑ If your family and pets must wait out a storm or other disaster at home, identify a safe area in your home where you can all stay together
- ❑ Bring pets into the house and confine them so you can leave with them quickly if necessary
- ❑ Make sure each pet carrier has up-to-date identification and contact information

- ❑ Keep dogs on leashes or in carriers and make sure they are wearing identification
- ❑ Be prepared with medications, pet food and water, along with emergency supplies
- ❑ Be sure to comfort your pet, as they are scared too, and having you near to give them reassurance will help
- ❑ Continue to feed your pet at their regularly scheduled time and provide them with water at all times

Go to **hsus.org** for more information from The Humane Society, and contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

