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Protect Your Pets from Disaster!

Be Prepared

Hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and hazardous material spills – disasters can strike any time and anywhere. With preparation and planning, your family – including your pets – can be protected.

If You Evacuate, Take Your Pets

The single most important thing that you can do to protect your pets if you evacuate is to take your pets with you! If it's not safe for you to stay in the disaster area it is not safe for your pets.

- Animals left behind in a disaster can easily get injured, lost, or killed. Animals left inside your home can escape through broken windows or other storm-damaged areas of your home. 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!
- Once you leave your home you have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area – you may not be able to go back for your pets. If you leave, even if you think you may only be gone for a few hours, take your animals.
- 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 must be evacuated by emergency officials you may be told to leave your pets behind.

Don't Forget ID

Your pets should be wearing up-to-date identification at all times. It's a good idea to include a number of a friend or relative outside your immediate area.

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 your 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. Keep lists of "pet-friendly" places handy. Call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave your home.
- Ask friends, relatives, or others outside your immediate area if they would shelter you and your animals, or if necessary just your animals. If you have more than one pet be prepared to house them separately.
- Make a list of veterinarians and boarding facilities that might shelter animals in emergencies; include 24-hour phone numbers.
- Ask your local animal shelter if they provide emergency foster care or shelter for pets in an emergency. This should be your last resort as shelters have limited resources and are likely to be stretched to their limits during an emergency.

Disaster Supply Checklist for Pets

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, add perishable items at the last minute, and have everything ready to go at a moment's notice. Keep everything accessible, stored in sturdy containers that can be carried easily (duffel bags, covered trash containers, etc.).

- Medications and medical records (stored in a waterproof container) and a first aid kit. A pet first aid book is also good to include. (For information about the HSUS book, *Pet First Aid: Cat and Dogs*, call 202-454-1100.)
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses and/or 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.)
- Current photos of your pet for identification in case your pet gets lost.
- Food, water, bowls, cat litter and litter box, and a manually-operated can opener.

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

Other Evacuation Tips

- All mobile home residents should evacuate at the first sign of a disaster.
- Evacuate to the safest location you can that is as close as possible to home. Long-distance evacuation can be a problem when highways are crowded.
- When planning for hurricanes, identify your evacuation zone and level to determine if and when you would have to evacuate. Be prepared for one category higher than the one being forecast, because hurricanes often increase in strength just before landfall.

If You Don't Evacuate

If your family and pets must wait out a storm or other disaster at home, identify a safe area of your home where you can all stay together: Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers and make sure they are wearing identification. Have any medications and a supply of pet food and water inside watertight containers, along with your other emergency supplies. If you need to purify water, add 2 drops of household bleach per quart of water, mix, seal tightly, and let stand for 30 minutes before drinking.

As the Disaster Approaches

Warnings of hurricanes or other disasters may be issued hours, even days, in advance. Don't wait until the last minute to get ready:

- Call to confirm emergency shelter arrangements for pets.
- Bring pets into the house so you can leave with them quickly.
- Make sure your disaster supplies are ready to go.

In Case You're Not Home

An evacuation order may come, or a disaster may strike, when you're at work or out of the house. Find out if a trusted neighbor would be able to take your pets and meet you at a prearranged location. If so, be sure that the person is comfortable with your pets, knows where your animals are likely to be, knows where your disaster supplies are kept, and has a key to your home. If you use a pet-sitting service, they may be able to help, but discuss the possibility well in advance.

After the Storm

Don't allow your pets to roam loose. Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your pet will probably be disoriented – pets can easily get lost in such situations. Walk dogs on a leash and keep cats inside (or in carriers if your house is damaged and they could escape). Be patient with your pets after a disaster. Try to get them back into their normal routines as soon as possible. Be ready for behavioral problems that may result from stress. If problems persist or if your pet seems to be having any health problem, talk to a veterinarian.

Be Prepared--Be Safe!