

## **Keeping your pets safe in an emergency**

You may face a number of emergencies or disasters in your lifetime – Fire, floods, chemical spills. They may require a brief absence from your home or permanent evacuation. Each type of disaster requires different measures to keep your pets safe.

***The best thing you can do for yourself and your pets is to be prepared.***

### **Step 1 – Get a Rescue Alert Sticker**

This easy-to-use sticker will let people know that pets are inside your home. Make sure it is visible to rescue workers, and that it includes 1) the types and number of pets in your household; 2) the name and phone number of your veterinarian; 3) your name and phone number; and 4) an emergency contact outside of your home area (friend or family member who can answer for you when your local phone is down). If you must evacuate with your pets, and if time allows, write “EVACUATED” across the stickers.



### **Step 2 – Arrange a Safe Haven**

Arrange a safe haven for your pets in the event of evacuation. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND.** Remember, if it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pets. They may become trapped or escape and be exposed to numerous life-threatening hazards. Note that Red Cross disaster shelters will not accept pets because of health and safety regulations, so it is imperative that you have determined where you will bring your pets ahead of time:

- Contact your veterinarian for a list of preferred boarding kennels and facilities.
- Ask your local animal shelter if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets.
- Identify hotels or motels outside of your immediate area that accept pets.
- Ask friends and relatives outside your immediate area if they would be willing to take your pet.

### **Step 3 – Emergency Supplies and Traveling Kits**

Keep an Evac-Pack and supplies handy for your pets. Make sure that everyone in the family knows where it is. This kit should be clearly labeled and easy to carry. Items to consider keeping in or near your pack include:

- Pet 1<sup>st</sup> Aid kit and guide book
- 3-7 days worth of canned (pop-top) or dry food (be sure to rotate every two months)
- Disposable litter trays (aluminum roasting pans are perfect)
- Litter
- Paper toweling
- Liquid dish soap and disinfectant
- Disposable garbage bags for clean-up
- Pet feeding dishes
- Extra harness and leash (Note: harnesses are recommended for safety and security)
- Photocopies of medical records and a two-week supply of any medicine your pet requires (Remember, food and medications need to be rotated out of your emergency kit – otherwise they may go bad or become useless.)
- Bottled water, at least 7 days' worth for each person and pet (store in a cool, dry place and replace every two months)
- A traveling bag, crate or sturdy carrier, ideally one for each pet

- Flashlight
- Blanket
- Recent photos of your pets (preferably with you in one photo, in case you are separated and need to search shelters)
- Especially for cats: Pillowcase or EvackSack, toys, scoopable litter
- Especially for dogs: Long leash and yard stake, toys and chew toys, a week's worth of cage liner.

#### **Step 4 – Choose a “Buddy”**

When choosing a “buddy” or *temporary caregiver*, consider someone who lives close to your residence. He or she should be someone who is generally home during the day while you are at work or has easy access to your home. A set of keys should be given to this trusted individual. This may work well with neighbors who have pets of their own – you may even swap responsibilities, depending upon who has accessibility. This person should be familiar with your evacuation plan, emergency contacts, and where you keep your Evac-Pack in case they need to evacuate your pets for you.

When selecting a *permanent caregiver*, you'll need to consider other criteria. This is a person to whom you are entrusting the care of your pet in the event that something should happen to you.

#### **Step 5 – Evacuation Preparation**

If you must evacuate your home in a crisis, plan for the worst-case scenario. If you think you may be gone for only a day, assume that you may not be allowed to return for several weeks. When recommendations for evacuation have been announced, follow the instructions of local and state officials. To minimize evacuation time, take these simple steps:

- Store your Evac-Pack and leashes as close to an exit as possible
  - Make sure all pets wear collars and tags with up-to-date identification. Your pet's ID tag should contain his name, telephone number, additional emergency contact number, and any urgent medical needs.
- Be sure to write your pet's name, your name and contact information on your pet's carrier.
- The ASPCA recommends microchipping your pet as a more permanent form of identification. A microchip is implanted in the animal's shoulder area and can be read by a scanner at most animal shelters. Be sure to keep your contact information up to date with the database provider.
- Always bring pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster. Pets can become disoriented and wander away from home during a crisis. Consider your evacuation route and call ahead to make pet-friendly hotel or pet boarding arrangements outside of the danger zone at the first sign of disaster.

If emergency officials recommend that you stay in your home, it's crucial that you keep your pets with you. Keep your Evac-Pack and supplies close at hand. Your pets may become stressed during the in-house confinement, so you may consider crating them for safety and comfort. This will also make it easier to leave if evacuation becomes necessary. Never evacuate and leave your pets behind in a crate, they will be rendered helpless until you return, or emergency responders find them.