

Taking care of and how to handle your pet in a disaster - They're family too!

In the event of a disaster pets are not allowed in emergency shelters for public health and safety reasons. Planning ahead can save your pet's life and make yours easier.

Here are some tips to help you plan ahead:

- Get a steel or fiberglass pet carrier or crate for each pet. Carriers should be large enough for the pet to stand up and turn around in.
- Familiarize your pet with the carrier.
- Make sure your pet's vaccinations and medical records are written and up-to-date. Most boarding facilities require proof of current rabies and distemper vaccinations. Have documentation of medications with dosing instructions and name and phone number of the veterinarian who dispensed the drugs.
- Make sure your pet wears a properly fitted collar with current license, rabies and identification tags. Identification tag should contain the animal's name, your name, address and phone number.
- Have a leash to maintain control of your pet.
- Find the best location in your home to put your pet during an emergency in the event you can't take the pet with you. The best locations will be away from windows such as an interior utility room, bathroom, kitchen or other tiled area that can be cleaned easily.
- Decide where you will take your pet if you have to leave your home during an emergency. Places to consider are: boarding kennels, veterinary hospitals with boarding facilities, friends or relatives and motels where you can stay with your pet (make sure the motel allows pets).
- Get non-spill food and water bowls.
- Discuss with your veterinarian what you should do if your pet is on a special diet or has other special needs.
- Stock up on dry pet food. This type of food is generally unpalatable and will prevent overeating.
- Stock up on newspapers, plastic bags, cleanser and disinfectants to properly handle pet waste.

During an emergency planning ahead will pay off. Here's what to do:

- Follow emergency instructions issued by emergency management or other local officials.
- Take your pet's immunizations and health records with you to prevent them from being damaged.
- If you have to evacuate and are taking your pet with you or to a boarding facility, take all of the items you have acquired (see above) including food and health records.

If you will be leaving your pet behind:

- Bring the pet indoors. Never leave them tied up outside.
 - Prepare and clean the pre-selected site.
 - Leave plenty of dry food in the non-spill bowl.
 - Leave plenty of water in a non-spill bowl or bathtub or leave the toilet seat up (flush the toilet first!).
 - Don't leave any treat type vitamins, mineral supplements or other medications. Overeating of these may cause poisoning.
 - Never leave a cat and dog confined together, even if they are normally friendly. And, keep smaller pets such as birds and hamsters away from dogs and cats.
 - Put large or dangerous animals in their carriers to reduce the possibility of them getting loose.
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