

Disasters

Keeping Companion Animals Safe During Disasters

Planning ahead is the key to keeping yourself and your companion animals safe during a disaster. Listed below are some tips that will reduce the risk to the animals that you are responsible for. For tips on how to keep the people in your family safe, contact your local chapter of the American Red Cross.

- Always keep a collar and tag on those animals that should normally wear collars. This includes cats that never go outdoors. When putting a collar on a cat be sure it is a break-away collar, which is designed to slip over a cat's head should the collar get caught on something. During a disaster an animal can escape and a collar and tag increases your chances of getting the animal back. On the tag, include your phone number and address. Remember the phones may not be working, so in order to reunite you with your companion animal an address is necessary. You may want to consider tattooing or micro chipping your animals as a more permanent form of identification. If you have been evacuated and are going to be living away from home for an extended period of time, you should put a temporary tag on your animals with a phone number, other than your home number. If someone finds your animal and tries to call your home number, there is a good chance it will not be working during a disaster.
- Identify several possible locations where you can take your animals should you have to evacuate. These would be places that would not likely be affected by the same disasters that would hit where you live. This would include boarding kennels, veterinary clinics with boarding space, grooming facilities, dog and cat clubs, and training clubs.
- Don't forget to consider friends and family members too. Look for hotels/motels that accept animals. Bookstores sell books that list "pet friendly" lodging. Some hotels/motels may not normally allow animals, but they may make an exception during a disaster, so make some inquiries. It is important to know that Red Cross evacuation shelters will not allow animals, other than seeing eye dogs and other recognized service dogs. If you are not sure where to take an animal when you evacuate, do not leave them behind, as this greatly increases the chances that an animal will not survive.
- Start a buddy system with someone in your neighborhood, so that they will check on your animals during a disaster in case you aren't home. Agree to do the same thing for them. Exchange information on veterinarians and have a permission slip put in your file at the vet, authorizing your "buddy" to get necessary emergency treatment for your animal should you not be able to be reached. If someone watches your animals while you are on vacation, talk with them about a disaster plan to be used to evacuate and care for your animals in your absence.
- In addition to your regular supply of animal food have at least a week's supply of food on hand to be used during a disaster. Store the dry food in an airtight/water proof container. If you use canned food, buy the flip top cans or have a can opener with your disaster supplies. Do not use canned food that has been opened and not refrigerated for an unsafe period of time. You should also include any favorite treats that your animals like, which can be a comfort to them during the stressful time that follows a disaster. Chew toys can help entertain a dog that might have to be chained or confined in a crate for the first time, or for longer periods of time than they are used to. Continue to feed your animals the food they are used to and put it out as close to the normal time as you can. Keeping them on their regular routine, the best you can, helps minimize the stress they might be feeling. If you feed canned food to dogs and cats, reduce the normal amount by half (supplement with dry food) to reduce the possibility of the animal getting diarrhea.
- You should have at least a week's supply of water in storage at all times for your animals. It can be

stored in the gallon containers it is purchased in, but do not keep it in direct sunlight, as algae will start to grow. Be sure to rotate the water at least once every other month. It is important to not let animals drink flood water or any other water sources that may be contaminated as a result of a disaster. If officials have issued a “boil water” warning, that means that the water that comes out of your tap is not healthy for people and animals to drink. If you are drinking bottled water or purified water during a disaster that is what your animals should be drinking too.

- Take several pictures of all the animals and keep these pictures with your important insurance papers that you would take with you if you have to evacuate. Be sure to include in the pictures any distinguishing marks that would make it easier to identify an animal. These pictures can help reunite you with a lost animal. Store the pictures in a re-sealable plastic bag in case you have to post them in the rain.
- Before a disaster strikes, talk to your veterinarian to see if he/she has a disaster plan. Your animal may need medical attention after a disaster has struck and you need to know where to take your animal. If your regular veterinarian does not have a plan, locate a veterinarian in your community who does. Knowing in advance where to take an injured animal may save that animal’s life if it is in critical condition and time can’t be wasted. Keep a first aid kit and first aid book in your disaster kit for your animals. Assembled kits and books can be bought at pet supply stores or ask your veterinarian for a list of what should go into a first aid kit if you want to put one together yourself. If you have a houseful of animals, putting together a kit yourself is advisable, as the prepackaged kits will probably not contain enough supplies.
- If an animal is on long-term medication, always keep a backup supply on hand, since a veterinary office may not be open for some time

following a disaster. If the medication needs to be refrigerated, keep an ice chest on hand to store it in, in case the electricity is off and you are unable to use your refrigerator. If you need ice, you can usually get it from a Red Cross shelter.

- Have, assembled and ready to go, a cat carrier to evacuate each cat in your household. An “Evacsak” is an alternative to a carrier. It is similar to a pillow-case, but is a much safer and more secure way to transport a small animal. They take up a lot less space than carriers, and if you have a house full of animals that need to be transported, you can get a lot more Evacsaks into a car. A carrier would then be used to house a cat if you have to be away from your home for an extended period of time. Be sure to have a shoe box size litter box and a food and a water dish to use in the carrier.
- Have a harness and leash for all the dogs in your household. If you have to evacuate, dogs can become frightened and if you only have a collar around their neck, they may be able to pull away from you and have the collar slip over their head. A harness will allow you to securely control your dog. If your dog rides in the car, always have a leash in the vehicle. A disaster may occur while you are away from home, and if you should have to abandon your car, you want to be able to keep your dog safely controlled. You may want to get a harness and a leash for your cat too, in case you have to keep them confined in a cage while you are living away from home. If they are not used to being in a cage, a harness would allow you to safely take them out of the cage and give them some exercise. Do not leave a cat unattended though while it is on a leash, otherwise, the cat might end up strangling itself.
- Have a stake out chain for all the dogs in your household. Walls and fences may come down during a disaster and it may be necessary to keep your dog confined on a chain leash until repairs can be made. Be sure the chain is long enough for



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the dog to move around, but not a length where it might get tangled around something and cause the dog to choke itself. Shelter from the elements should be within the dog's reach too. If you do not have something to attach the chain to, you should get a stake that screws into the ground. Be sure it is secure for the size dog you have. Pet supply stores sell a variety of sizes.

- If your dog is kept in an outdoor run, make sure it's in a location where falling debris (tree limbs, shingles, power lines, chimney bricks, etc.) won't fall on the run and possibly injure the dog. If something were to fall on the run and possibly prevent opening the door, you should have a heavy duty wire cutter, in case the dog was trapped inside and had to be freed.
- Be sure and comfort your animals during a disaster. They are frightened too, and having you near to give them a hug will help. It will probably do a lot to help you too. If an animal is not ready to be comforted though, do not force it. This is especially true for cats. Let an animal come to you when it is ready.
- Know where the animal shelters or animal rescue organizations are in your area. You may need to visit them after a disaster to look for a missing animal. It is important to start looking for a missing animal as soon as you realize it is gone, as some shelters may not be able to house for a very long time large numbers of displaced animals that arrive during a disaster.

Disaster Preparedness Shopping List for Cats

Are you prepared to take care of your cat when a disaster strikes? If not, NOW is the time to stock up on the items that you will need so you will not be unprepared. Listed below is a handy shopping list for you to use. The next time you buy food or supplies for your cat, take this list with you. Don't put off doing what you should do now - it may just make the

difference between being able to keep your cat alive when a disaster strikes.

Here are the supplies that you should have in a disaster kit for cats. Adjust the amounts, depending on the number of cats that you have.

Food

Have at least a (2) week supply at all times. Use the brand that your cat is used to eating. Buy pop top cans of food small enough to be used at one feeding since you may not have a way to properly refrigerate a partially used can of food - do not feed food that has been left out. Store dry food in an airtight, water proof container. Rotate food at least once every (3) months. Include in your supplies a feeding dish, a spoon to scoop and mix the food, and a hand crank can opener in case you do not have pop top cans.

Water

Have at least a (2) week supply at all times. Store water in plastic containers and keep in a cool, dark place. Rotate water at least once every (2) months.

Sanitation

Have a small litter box and litter scoop in your supplies. Have a supply of cat litter to last at least (2) weeks. Have some plastic bags in your supplies for disposing of your cat's waste.

Cleaning Supplies

Have a small container of dish soap for cleaning purposes. Have paper towels for drying dishes and for other cleanup.

Collar and Tag

Have a proper fitting break away collar and tag on your cat at all times, and keep an extra collar in your supplies in case the permanent one gets lost. Have a spare temporary tag in your supplies that you can write on - if you are going to be living somewhere else temporarily, you should put that address and



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phone number on the tag. You may want to consider microchipping or tattooing your cat as a more permanent form of identification.

Harness and Leash

You should have a proper fitting harness and leash in your supplies so that if you have to keep your cat confined in a cage for an extended period of time, you have a secure way to take the cat out of the cage to get some exercise.

Confining Your Cat

You should have a wire collapsible cage to transport your cat in should you have to evacuate and/or to keep it in following the disaster (remember that exterior walls can fall down and windows may be broken, so you need a secure way to keep your cat safely confined). Be sure the cage is large enough to give the cat room to spread out, and extra space for a food and water dish, plus a litter box. If your cat plays with toys, include in your supplies some toys to keep your cat entertained.

First Aid Kit and First Aid Book

You should have in your supplies a basic first aid kit, along with a first aid book for cats. Here are some basic items to include in that kit:

- Medications
- Conforming bandage (3"x5") absorbent gauze pads (4"x4") absorbent gauze pad (3"x 1 yard)
- Q-tips (1 box)
- Antiseptic wipes emollient cream
- Tweezers and scissors
- Instant cold pack
- Latex disposable gloves (several pairs)

If your cat is on long-term medication, always have on hand at least a (2) week supply, since your vet may not be able to open right away to fill a prescription. Check with your veterinarian to see if he/she has a disaster plan - if not find a veterinarian in your area who does have a plan so that you can get medical care for your

cat should it get injured during the disaster. Keep your cat's medical records, including records of vaccinations with your disaster supplies.

Pictures

You should have in your supplies some current pictures of your cat to use in case your cat gets lost during the disaster - be sure to include yourself in some of the pictures in case you have to show proof of ownership.

Disaster Preparedness

Shopping List for Dogs

Are you prepared to take care of your dog when a disaster strikes? If not, NOW is the time to stock up on the items that you will need so you will not get caught unprepared.

Following is a handy shopping list for you to use. The next time you buy food or supplies for your dog, take this list with you. Don't put off doing what you should do now - it may just make the difference between being able to keep your dog alive when a disaster strikes. Here are the supplies that you should have in a disaster kit for dogs. Adjust the amounts, depending on the number of dogs that you have.

Food

Always have a reserve supply of the type of food your dog is used to eating that would last at least a week. If your dog eats canned food, buy cans small enough to be used at one feeding since you may not have a way to properly refrigerate any left over food, and buy pop top cans if you can since you may not have access to a can opener (you should include a can opener with your disaster supplies just in case though). Store food in an airtight, water proof container and rotate food at least once every (3) months. Include with your disaster supplies an extra feeding dish, just in case the one normally used is lost. Include with your disaster supplies a spoon to scoop and/or mix food.



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Water

Have enough drinking water to last at least one week for each dog in your household. Store water in a cool, dark location, and be sure to rotate it so it remains fresh, remember that if the tap water is not suitable for humans to drink, it is also not suitable for animals to drink. Include with your disaster supplies an extra water dish, just in case the one normally used is lost.

Sanitation

Have a pooper scooper in your disaster supplies for picking up after your dog. Have some plastic bags in your supplies for disposing of your dog's waste, you may want to purchase some disposable pooper scooper bags at a pet supply store.

Cleaning

Include with your disaster supplies a small container of soap for washing out your dog's food dish. Include with your disaster supplies some paper towels for drying dishes and other cleanup if you will be housing your dog in a crate, include with your disaster supplies a disinfectant that can be used to clean the crate.

Collar and Tag

A proper fitting collar and an identification tag should be kept on your dog at all times, and an extra collar and identification tag should be kept with your disaster supplies should the permanent ones get lost during a disaster (do not keep a choke collar on a dog all the time, as your dog may accidentally get it caught on something and choke itself). Have a spare identification tag with your disaster supplies that you can write on, so that if you are going to be living somewhere temporarily you can put the phone number and address of that location on the tag. Keep a proper fitting dog harness and at least a 6 foot long leash with your disaster supplies to be used when you walk your dog - this is a stressful time for dogs too, and a frightened dog can slip out of a collar, but not a harness.

Temporarily Confining Your Dog

You may wish to purchase a plastic airline crate or a wire collapsible crate to transport your dog should you have to evacuate and/or to keep the dog in following a disaster - be sure the crate is large enough for your dog to lie down comfortably and allow room for a food and water dish (remember that fences and walls can come down during a disaster, making it easier for a dog to escape and get lost). You may wish to purchase a metal stake that screws into the ground, with a place to fasten a dog chain - be sure if you stake your dog out to provide protection from the hot sun, extreme cold, snow, or rain - a dog house should be placed within reach to protect the dog - it is also important when staking out a dog that you do not leave it somewhere that other aggressive animals might be able to get to it. When staking a dog, be sure to use a chain and not a leash that the dog can chew through also be sure that the dog is not chained in a place where it could fall off of something and hang itself (for example, an elevated porch).

First Aid Kit

Check with your veterinarian to find out what he/she recommends you include in your first aid kit some suggested items include:

- First aid book for dogs
- Conforming bandage (3" x 5")
- Absorbent gauze pads (4" x 4")
- Absorbent gauze roll (3" x 1 yard)
- Cotton tipped applicators (1 small box)
- Antiseptic wipes (1 package)
- Emollient cream (1 container)
- Tweezers and scissors
- Instant cold pack
- Latex disposable gloves (several pairs)
- Proper fitting muzzle



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