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## **Are YOU Prepared For An Emergency?**

### **Before the Disaster – Plan Ahead!**

Now is the time to THINK. A little preparedness will make life for you and your pets much easier and safer during and after an event. Plan for actions to be taken if you shelter in place and if you evacuate. Remember, if you are ordered to evacuate, conditions are not only unsafe for you but also for your pets as well.

Develop a **PET EMERGENCY KIT**:

- Build a packet of information and store it in a **WATER-PROOF CARRIER** in an easily-accessed permanent location: The packet should include:
  - Current, clear, color photos (front, left, and right sides) of each pet in case it gets lost.
  - Proof of current vaccinations. (They may be required by shelters.) Schedule annual vaccinations prior to the start of the disaster season in your area.
  - Licenses, health records, and ownership papers, including individual microchip / tattoo numbers.
- Make sure you have an **adequate number of properly sized crates**. Remember that frightened pets may exhibit behavior changes.
- Each pet should be **microchipped, tattooed, or identified in some manner** to ease its return should it get lost. Using more than one ID can improve the odds of being reunited with a lost pet. Consider placing an ID tag with an out-of-state contact name & address AND PHONE NUMBER along with your local information on its collar. Don't forget to place ID on the crates!
- **Develop a list** of places where you can get veterinary care, food, shelter, and housing for your pets in an emergency. Include phone numbers and addresses on your list.
- **Plan your evacuation strategy and route**. Friends and relatives in a safe area should be your first choice but you should also develop a list, including addresses and phone numbers, of pet-friendly hotels / motels along possible evacuation routes. Pet-friendly hotels / motels can be found through [www.petswelcome.com](http://www.petswelcome.com).

- Think about safeguarding the records you will need after the disaster is over. Ziplock bags are useful in protecting legal documents, kennel records, insurance policies, etc. Think about placing duplicate copies of legal documents in a second location.
- Arrange with one or more family members located outside your geographic area to relay information. Often people cannot call into a disaster area but it is possible to phone out. Provide each with a list of people (and their phone numbers) who will need to be contacted with information on your status.
- Develop a supply of quarters. Public pay phones are often the first to resume service.
- Purchase and maintain a supply of disinfectant sufficient enough to prepare a clean housing and exercise area for your pets. A supply of plastic can be very useful in many ways following a disaster. Heavy plastic can be used to cover an area under and around your crates and under your X-pens as you travel, and when you return home until you can clean and disinfect an area where you can take care of your pets. It can be used to cover windows, fill in for broken windows or doorways, cover muddy flooring or in many other ways. Just remember to store it in some manner so that it is protected from becoming contaminated by high water or mud. Also, be sure the plastic sheeting is thick enough to withstand some strain but on a roll or in a package light enough for you to pick up.
- You should plan on having enough water in non-breakable containers to provide a 14-day supply of double the total consumption of your pets on an average day and enough food for a 14-day supply. Don't forget a manual can opener. Calculate your food and water needs for your family for the same time period.
- Food stored in a watertight container can quickly be moved to a protected and/or high location in the event you are warned of an impending disaster.

Regardless of whether you shelter in place or leave – or even on a day to day basis - the following materials will prove handy:

- A leash and collar for each pet.
- If you evacuate, exercise pens will be handy if you can fit them in.
- Grooming equipment and shampoo, paper towels, bath towels, toys and comfort items.
- Newspapers, pooper scooper, plastic bags, cleanser, and disinfectant.
- Work with your vet to develop a First Aid Kit, including special medications, dosages, and care instructions. Update the kit periodically to keep the medications, ointments, and lotions up to date.
- Non-breakable food and water dishes.

As you are planning, remember that, although it may seem easier at first to shelter in place, you may not be able to reach your kennel. Also, consider the difficulties of providing a healthy environment without electricity, running water, and possibly very limited supplies.

### **During the Disaster - Timing is important!**

- When a tropical storm is named, or a flood is forecast and the need for evacuation is projected, call ahead and make plans to stay with your friends or relatives, or make your reservations at a motel/hotel located away from coastal and river areas and away from the projected strike area. If you stay at a hotel or motel, verify the number of pets allowed, room rates, and fees.



- **Gathering and confining pets as soon as a hurricane warning is declared or a flood is eminent will save you time later.** Pets can sense weather changes and may try to hide or isolate themselves. Confine them as you work to ready the house, and pack the car / van if you are going to evacuate. Remember your pets can feel your stress and emotional state.
- **If you have more pets than will fit in your car or van at one time, plan ahead and START EARLY.** You may need to make more than one trip to move them to safety or may need to get help from a friend or relative. Allow time for extremely slow travel.

## **After The Disaster – Recovery**

The aftermath of a disaster can disrupt a community for a very long time. You will need to provide for your health and safety as well as that of your pets until utilities are restored, debris is cleared, and property is repaired. You may experience an outbreak of disease, widespread animal death, broken sewage lines, and widespread water pollution, and failed utilities.

During the recovery process, you can take many precautions to safeguard yourself and your pets:

- If an order has been given to boil all tap water, use only container water, boiled water, or purified water until officials tell you the tap water is safe once again.

(To purify water, boil it at a rolling boil for 10 minutes. To improve its taste, pour it from one container to another several times. You may also use purification tablets (available at most sporting goods and drug stores) or purify with bleach by adding 2 drops / quart of clear water (4 drops / quart of cloudy water). Mix well, seal tightly, and let stand for 30 minutes before drinking.) If the water does not taste and smell of chlorine after 30 minutes, repeat the process and let stand another 15 minutes.

Wells should be flushed out and the water tested before drinking.

- Check for structural damage and snakes or wildlife before entering a building, barn, or kennel.
- Open buildings up and let them air for a while to remove odors or escaped gas. Do not use any device with an open flame until you are sure you do not have a problem with escaped gas.
- Once inside the building, check for electrical shorts and live wires. Make sure the power is turned off and do not use any electricity until an electrician has checked your system. Report broken utility wires as / where appropriate.
- Empty any containers that contain floodwater. Clean and disinfect all containers with chlorine bleach or other disinfectant before they are used again. Discard all wet or damp food and bedding. Spoiled foods need to be stored in durable plastic bags (e.g. 4 mil plastic bags) or containers until trash pickup resumes. Bleach sprinkled over spoiled food can help reduce odors. Domestic and wild animals will be confused because of the loss of their territorial markers. They will be attracted to poorly discarded food, and may become a threat to family and pets or may become ill themselves.

- **Before pets are allowed into an area, fences should be checked, all debris should be removed, and the area should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.**
- Stay with your pets or walk them on leash until they become re-oriented. Familiar scents and landmarks may have been altered and pets may become confused and stressed.

If any of your pets are hurt or lost, listen to emergency broadcasts for the ANIMAL HOT LINE. Special community Bulletin Boards for animal relief information will be posted, when possible, during times of severely limited communications in your area.

Make a note of the following helpful phone numbers in your emergency packet:

National Lost Pet Hotline 1-900-535-1515

National Found Hot Line 1-800-755-8111

## **Resources to Help You Plan**

*Lots of disaster preparedness information is available. A web search for "hurricane preparedness" or "disaster preparedness" will produce a large selection of helpful sites. Some of the best are:*

Evacuation Map: <http://www.hcoem.org/Documents/EvacuationMap.pdf>.

Texas Extension Disaster Extension Network (EDEN), part of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service: <http://texashelp.tamu.edu/> This website offers excellent information and links to information on a variety of issues.

American Veterinary Medical Association publication, [Saving the Whole Family](http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving_family.asp)  
[http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving\\_family.asp](http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving_family.asp)

Pet-Friendly Lodging: <http://www.pet-friendly-hotels.net/>

Check your local hardware and grocery stores for disaster planning tips specific to your area.

FEMA and individual state emergency management agency websites contain excellent tips for emergency preparedness. Some states offer assistance in developing your disaster plan and FEMA even offers an online course in disaster preparedness that leads to a certificate of completion upon the passing of a written 45-question mail-in exam with a score of 75% or better.

FEMA and The American Red Cross have developed a "Disaster Supplies Kit" list that could easily be used in a discussion of emergency preparedness at a club meeting. It is available online at the American Red Cross or from local Red Cross chapters. Permission to use it is given if proper credit for its development is given.

Hurricane Preparation in Houston by Donald Ray Burger, Attorney at Law, Houston, Texas: <http://www.burger.com/hrcnprep.htm> Excellent, very detailed "To Do" lists, checklists, and tips for disaster preparation and response.