

Companion Animal Owners Guide for Disaster Planning

(Edited from Iowa's County Emergency Response Template for Pets in Disaster)

Develop an Emergency Plan and Practice It

How can you get started with emergency preparedness? Start by imagining the types of disasters that you might encounter. This is the first step toward developing an effective disaster plan. Then, develop a general family disaster plan. The federal and local emergency management agencies and the American Red Cross have brochures that will help you develop your plan.

Some points on plan development include:

- Practice evacuation of your family and pets until you can evacuate within a few minutes.
- Decide on a place where your family will meet if you get separated.
- Decide who will take care of your pet and where he or she will stay during a crisis.
- Consider having your pets and animals micro-chipped to assure proper identification of your pets and animals if they should become separated from you.
- If you have a personal emergency, make arrangements for pet care with neighbors, family and friends. Make sure they have keys to your house and leave information on where you will be, how you can be reached, which room the animals are in, and how to care for your pets.
- Do not leave unfamiliar foods and treats for your pet. They may overeat which leads to intestinal problems. Provide water in a heavy bowl that cannot be tipped over.
- Always keep exotic pets in separate rooms. Many exotic pets can be very dangerous to disaster personnel and other animals not familiar with them or who encounter them unexpectedly. Leave warnings and handling instructions for all exotics, especially poisonous ones.
- Paste labels clearly for rescue workers to see what animals they will encounter, how many and where they can contact somebody familiar with how to take care of them.
- For disaster or local emergency situations, think of who you would phone outside of your area. Often people cannot phone into a disaster zone, but it is possible to phone out. An out-of-state contact can help relay information and keep your family connected. The best emergency plans involve many people and systems that can back each other up. Here are some people and groups you need to get involved:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Neighbors

- Your veterinarian
- Your local animal control or humane shelter
- Local boarding and grooming kennels
- Local hotels and motels in your area that accept pets

Disaster Preparedness Checklist for Animal Owners

Following are items every animal owner should have in preparation for a disaster that may require animal rescue:

- Your written family disaster plan
- Disaster preparedness kit (see below)
- Crate and bedding
- Food, water, manual can opener, and dishes
- Plastic bags, paper towels, newspaper (when shredded, can be used as cat litter), disinfectant
- Collar, leash, harnesses
- Muzzles, gauze rolls
- Identification tags
- Current medical and vaccination records. Vaccination examples are rabies, distemper, parvo and bordetella for dogs and feline rhinotracheitis for cats. Check with your veterinarian about other vaccinations.
- Extra bottles of daily medications or copies of prescriptions with current expiration date
- Current photos
- Pet comfort items: towels, blankets, toys
- List of hotels, motels and boarding kennels that accept pets
- Detailed instructions for animal care and rescue workers
- First aid kit
- Flashlights, batteries
- Copies of health certificates
- Out-of-state telephone contact

Accustom Your Pets to Actions Needed in a Disaster

- Train your dog. Obedience may save its life during an emergency and help to make it a welcome guest.
- Familiarize your pet with its transport crate before a crisis.
- Familiarize your pet with being transported. You can practice drills with your pet by getting it used to riding with you in your car. That way it will not be unduly alarmed if it has to evacuate in a disaster.
- Cats can be very difficult to catch when they are stressed or afraid. Practice catching and transporting your cat in a crate and carrying it around the house. This will allow your pet to become familiar with the transport box.

Prepare a Disaster Kit for Each Pet

You should have a disaster kit for each pet. Do not store kits in the kitchen or the garage. These are frequently the areas where fires start.

Kits and their contents should be easily retrieved and kept in rodent- and ant-proof containers. Check the contents of the disaster kits twice a year when the clocks change for daylight savings. Rotate all foods into use and replace with fresh food every two months.

Here are some items that are recommended for your disaster kit:

- Extra collars and tags, harnesses and leashes for all pets (including cats).
- Muzzles may be needed to control agitated and aggressive animals — for dogs, these can be made from gauze rolls or panty hose. A muzzle or towel can be used for cats. A towel can be used to restrain your bird if it becomes agitated and aggressive during the confusion.
- Extra pet food to avoid diet changes in stressful situations.
- Toys or blankets your pet will find familiar.
- A manual can opener.
- Food, water, and bowls for each pet.
- Paper towel, plastic bags, and spray disinfectant for animal waste clean up.
- Copies of your pet's medical and vaccination records. Boarding facilities may not accept your pets without proof of vaccination or health records.
- If your pet is on medication, ask your veterinarian about keeping extra supplies of medication or a copy of the prescription for these medications in your kit. Mark your calendar to replace medications before they expire.
- A recent photo of your pet.
- Purchase a crate or container for your pet. Your crate should be easily accessible and large enough for your pet to stand up and turn around. Since animals may be sheltered in open facilities, make sure there is enough bedding to keep them warm. You should also label the crate with your pet's name, your name and where you can be reached.

- Pet first aid kit. The kit should include only materials that you know how to use. Remember that if your pet has a problem and you do not know exactly what it is, you should consult a veterinarian.

Useful items for a first aid kit for pets include:

- Bandaging materials to cover wounds
- Animal antiseptic ointment
- Clippers
- Latex gloves
- Tweezers.

Special Recommendations for Birds

The care of birds in disasters requires special consideration. Following are some recommendations.

- Determine if your birds need a continuous supply of power. Purchase a generator to meet your facilities' needs. Make sure your generator is in good running condition by starting it monthly.
- Make sure you have a sufficient water supply. Large water containers with chlorinated water (10 drops of chlorine bleach to each gallon of water) can be used to store water that prohibits bacterial growth. Store water away from sunlight.
- Aviaries should be equipped with an overhead sprinkler system. This will be very important to minimize smoke inhalation, cool the air and reduce the chance of burn injuries.
- Aviculturists should have enough carriers on hand to evacuate all birds. Many birds will run into their nest boxes during a crisis. Nest boxes should be equipped with quick-release latches and a hinge-type cover over the entrance to enable you to remove the nest box and use it as a pet carrier. Flights should be constructed with easy access into and out of them.
- Birds often require specialty foods. Make sure you know what these are and where you can get them. Although surplus food can often be refrigerated, this may not be possible in a disaster, when the power supply is out.
- If vaccinations are appropriate for your bird, be sure they are up-to-date. Consult your veterinarian to learn which vaccinations are appropriate.
- Birds should be tested and free of psittacosis and tuberculosis. These are serious diseases and are transmissible to many other animals and people.
- Do not leave your birds where they can be exposed to fumes from fires or chemicals. Birds are sensitive to smoke and fumes and succumb more quickly to smoke than most other animals.

Actions to Help Ensure a Safe Response to a Disaster

- Stay calm and assess the situation.
- Never put yourself or others at risk. Do not attempt to rescue your pet if your life or health or that of others may be placed in danger.
- Crate your cat or dog immediately. If you do not, your pet may sense danger. This will make them want to hide and they become more difficult to catch and crate.
- Listen to the emergency alert system on your radio or television for instructions on what you should do and whether special arrangements have been made for people with pets. Follow any emergency alert guidance that is provided and incorporate them into your actions.
- If your pet has been exposed to chemicals, get information on how to handle it without harming yourself. You should have identified sources of veterinary care and other information in your emergency plan.
- Under *no* circumstances should you *ever* leave your pet behind, tied up outside or let them loose to fend for themselves. Roaming dogs are a public health hazard and owners remain responsible for any injuries or damage caused by the dog. In large disasters where loose animals become a problem, animal control shelters often have no other option than to treat these animals as abandoned. Many pets have to be adopted, fostered, or euthanized.
- Make sure somebody knows where you can be contacted and what the needs and location of your pets are.

Recovery Period Guidelines

- Check your pet for injury and exposure to chemicals. If you have any concerns about the health of your pet or their exposure to hazardous materials, contact a veterinarian before you attempt to treat them.
- If you have to move to new surroundings, do not remove your pet from its crate until it is calm. Do so only in a closed room.
- Be careful in allowing your cat or dog out after a major disaster. Follow the recommendations of the emergency management personnel as to whether the environment is safe for you and your pet.
- Give your pet small amounts of food and water several times throughout the day. The volumes of food may be increased to normal over three to four days.
- Let your pet have plenty of uninterrupted sleep. If you still have your pet's favorite toys, encourage them to play. This will allow them to recover from the stress and trauma.
- Avoid unfamiliar activities with your pet, such as bathing, excessive exercise, or diet supplements. Try to avoid diet changes.
- If you and your pet are separated, pay daily visits to local shelters, animal control facilities, veterinary offices and kennels until you have found it. A phone call is often not as effective as a visit. You can also post photos of

your lost pet. If your pet has tattoos, a microchip or other permanent identification, this will increase the chances of finding it. Be aware that collars and tags are sometimes lost.

- If you find a at-large animal, take it to a shelter or other facility set up for lost and found animals. Place an advertisement in the local newspaper to inform the owner where the pet was taken. Often newspapers run found ads for free.
- Share your experiences with friends and family. Talking about your experiences will help you deal with them and offers great stress relief.
- Consider seeking professional counseling, as recovery is aided when guided by professionals experienced in dealing with disasters.
- Any unfamiliar stress on an animal raises potential concern about its well-being.

Animal welfare can be compromised in disasters in the following ways.

- Being left without food and water in secured areas
- Prolonged confinement in cages in animal shelters and lack of socialization
- Lack of appropriate veterinary care