

# Disaster Preparedness



Emergencies come in many forms, and they may require anything from a brief absence from your home to permanent evacuation. Each type of disaster requires different measures to keep your pets safe, so the best thing you can do for yourself and your pets is to be prepared. Here are simple steps you can follow now to make sure you're ready before the next disaster strikes:

## 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 (we recommend placing it on or near your front door), and that it includes the types and number of pets in your home as well as the name and number of your veterinarian. If you must evacuate with your pets, and if time allows, write "EVACUATED" across the stickers. To get a free emergency pet alert sticker for your home, please fill out our online order form (<https://secure.asPCA.org/take-action/order-your-pet-safety-pack>) and allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Your local pet supply store may also sell similar 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 not all shelters accept pets, 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 in your pet.

### **Step 3: Choose "Designated Caregivers"**

This step will take considerable time and thought. When choosing a 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.

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. When selecting this "foster parent," consider people who have met your pet and have successfully cared for animals in the past. Be sure to discuss your expectations at length with a permanent caregiver, so he or she understands the responsibility of caring for your pet.



### **Step 4: Prepare Emergency Supplies and Traveling Kits**

If you must evacuate your home in a crisis, plan for the worst-case scenario. Even 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:

- Make sure all pets wear collars and tags with up-to-date identification information. Your pet's ID tag should contain his name, telephone number and any urgent medical needs. Be sure to also 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 under the skin in the animal's shoulder area, and can be read by a scanner at most animal shelters.
- Always bring pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster. Pets can become disoriented and wander away from home in a crisis.
- Store an emergency kit and leashes as close to an exit as possible. Make sure that everyone in the family knows where it is, and that it is clearly labeled and easy to carry. Items to consider keeping in or near your "Evac-Pack" include:
  - Pet first-aid kit and guide book (ask your vet what to include)
  - 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 or paper toweling
- Liquid dish soap and disinfectant
- Disposable garbage bags for clean-up
- Pet feeding dishes and water bowls
- Extra collar or harness as well as an extra leash
- Photocopies and/or USB of medical records and a waterproof container with 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)
- At least seven days’ worth of bottled water 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 (in case you are separated and need to make “Lost” posters)
- Especially for cats: Pillowcase, toys, scoop-able litter
- Especially for dogs: Extra leash, toys and chew toys, a week’s worth of cage liner

You should also have an emergency kit for the human members of the family. Items to include: Batteries, duct tape, flashlight, radio, multi-tool, tarp, rope, permanent marker, spray paint, baby wipes, protective clothing and footwear, extra cash, rescue whistle, important phone numbers, extra medication and copies of medical and insurance information.

### **Step 5: Keep the ASPCA On-Hand at All Times**

The free ASPCA mobile app shows pet parents exactly what to do in case of a natural disaster. It also allows pet owners to store vital medical records and provides information on making life-saving decisions during natural disasters. With a few swipes, you can:

- Access critical advice on what to do with your pet before, during, and after a major storm—even if there’s no data connectivity.
- Store and manage your pet’s critical health records.
- Receive a personalized missing pet recovery kit, including step-by-step instructions on how to search for a lost animal in a variety of circumstances.
- Build a lost pet digital flyer that can be shared instantly on your social media channels.
- Get the latest and most relevant news about pets and animal welfare.

## **Other Considerations**

### **Geographic Considerations:**

If you live in an area that is prone to certain natural disasters, such as tornadoes, earthquakes or floods, you should plan accordingly.

- Determine well in advance which rooms offer safe havens. These rooms should be clear of hazards such as windows, flying debris, etc.
- Choose easy-to-clean areas such as utility rooms, bathrooms and basements as safe zones
- Access to a supply of fresh water is particularly important. In areas that may lose electricity, fill up bathtubs and sinks ahead of time to ensure that you have access to water during a power outage or other crises.
- In the event of flooding, go to the highest location in your home, or a room that has access to counters or high shelves where your animals can take shelter.

### **Special Considerations for Horses**

- Keep a clean and tidy stable and pasture. Remove hazardous and flammable materials, debris and machinery from around the barn's walkways, entrances and exits. Regularly maintain and inspect barn floors and septic tanks. Inspect your grounds regularly and remove dangerous debris in the pasture.
- Prevent fires by instituting a no-smoking policy around your barn. Avoid using or leaving on appliances in the barn, even seemingly-harmless appliances like box fans, heaters and power tools can overheat. Exposed wiring can also lead to electrical fires in the barn, as can a simple nudge from an animal who accidentally knocks over a machine.
- Get your horse used to wearing a halter, and get him used to trailering. Periodically, you should practice quickly getting your horse on a trailer for the same reason that schools have fire drills—asking a group of unpracticed children to exit a burning building in a calm fashion is a little unrealistic, as is requesting a new and strange behavior of your horse.
- If you own a trailer, please inspect it regularly. Also, make sure your towing vehicle is appropriate for the size and weight of the trailer and horse. Always make sure the trailer is hitched properly—the hitch locked on the ball, safety chains or cables attached, and emergency brake battery charged and linked to towing vehicle. Proper tire pressure (as shown on the tire wall) is also very important.
- Get your horse well-socialized and used to being handled by all kinds of strangers. If possible, invite emergency responders and/or members of your local fire service to interact with your horse. It will be mutually beneficial for them to become acquainted. Firemen's turnout gear may smell like smoke and look unusual, which many horses find frightening—so ask them to wear their usual response gear to get your horse used to the look and smell.
- Set up a phone tree/buddy system with other nearby horse owners and local farms. This could prove invaluable should you—or they—need to evacuate animals or share resources like trailers, pastures or extra hands!

- Keep equine veterinary records in a safe place where they can quickly be reached. Be sure to post emergency phone numbers by the phone. Include your 24-hour veterinarian, emergency services and friends. You should also keep a copy for emergency services personnel in the barn that includes phone numbers for you, your emergency contact, your 24-hour veterinarian and several friends.

### **Special Considerations for Birds**

- Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage or carrier.
- In cold weather, make certain you have a blanket over your pet's cage. This may also help reduce the stress of traveling.
- In warm weather, carry a spray bottle to periodically moisten your bird's feathers.
- Have recent photos available, and keep your bird's leg bands on for identification.
- If the carrier does not have a perch, line it for paper towels that you can change frequently.
- Keep the carrier in as quiet an area as possible.
- It is particularly imperative that birds eat on a daily basis, so purchase a timed feeder. If you need to leave your bird unexpectedly, the feeder will ensure his daily feeding schedule.
- Items to keep on hand: Catch net, heavy towel, blanket or sheet to cover cage, cage liner.

### **Special Considerations for Reptiles**

- A snake may be transported in a pillowcase, but you should have permanent and secure housing for him when you reach a safe place.
- Take a sturdy bowl that is large for your pet to soak in. It's also a good idea to bring along a heating pad or other warming device, such as a hot water bottle.
- Lizards can be transported like birds (see above).

### **Special Considerations for Small Animals**

- Small animals, such as hamsters, gerbils, mice and guinea pigs, should be transported in secure carriers with bedding materials, food and food bowls.
- Items to keep on hand: Salt lick, extra water bottle, small hidebox or tube, a week's worth of bedding.

<https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/disaster-preparedness>