

Have You Prepared Your Pet Emergency Kit Yet?

If you don't do this, you may regret it forever. Hundreds of thousands of pets are affected by natural disasters each year, and many pet parents aren't prepared. Disaster can strike anytime, anywhere. These 6 steps will provide you the mental relief that you're as ready as you can be.

Reviewed by **Dr. Becker**

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Many pet owners won't be prepared to care for their animal companions in the event of a natural disaster
- Disaster can strike anywhere, at any time. Just a bit of preparation can mean the difference between survival and the alternative for all the members of your household
- To avoid losing a beloved pet in an emergency, preparation can prove priceless
- There are several steps you can take to insure your pet will be safe and well-cared for if disaster strikes
- Always plan to take your pet with you if you evacuate. You really have no way of knowing how long you'll be gone, and if staying in your home isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pet, either

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Sadly, if and **when disaster strikes**, many pet owners won't be prepared to save their animal companions. Hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats are affected by natural disasters each year, though no one knows for sure how many pets are lost, injured, or killed.

Dogs, cats and other animals left behind in a disaster can die quickly by drowning or fire, for example. Or they can die slow, agonizing deaths confined in a condemned home, tied up in a backyard, or waiting inside an apartment for an owner who won't be returning.

If a pet left behind is able to escape confinement, he'll wander the streets looking for water, food and shelter, and can ultimately succumb to dehydration, starvation or disease.

Pets lucky enough to be rescued can be deeply traumatized by what they've been through, and may develop stress-related behaviors that make adoption by a new family difficult.

There's also the terrible sense of loss and grief pet guardians feel when they don't know what's become of a beloved animal companion left behind.

Preparation is priceless, and in no situation is this truer than when it becomes necessary to keep furry family members safe and in good health in the event of a disaster.

Disaster Preparedness Tips

1. **Prepare a pet emergency kit** — Pack a to-go emergency kit for your pet. Let everyone in the household know where the kit is stored, and be sure to check it once or twice a year and replace expired items. The ASPCA suggests including the following items in your kit:¹

- Pet first-aid kit
- A 3 to 7 day supply of canned (pop-top), dehydrated or freeze dried food (be sure to use and replace about every 2 months)
- Disposable litter trays (aluminum roasting pans work well)
- Litter or paper towels
- Liquid dish soap and disinfectant
- Disposable garbage bags
- Pet food and water bowls
- Extra collar or harness and leash
- Toys (and chew toys for dogs)
- Photocopies and/or USB of your pet's medical records and a waterproof container with a two-week supply of any medicine your pet requires (remember to also use and replace medications before they expire)
- 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 (one for each pet)
- Flashlight
- Blankets (and pillowcases for cats)
- Recent photos of your pets (in case you get separated and need to create flyers to post)

2. **Keep your pet's identification updated (at all times)** — Be sure the information connected to your pet's microchip, if she has one, is current. Also ensure the information on your pet's collar or ID tag is accurate so you can be located in the event you become separated from your pet.

Consider adding the name and phone number of a family member or friend who doesn't live in your immediate area. If you're not reachable, there'll be someone at the other number who will be.

3. **Know where you'll find shelter if you need to evacuate** — If you need to leave your home in a disaster situation, please, don't leave your pets behind. They are unlikely to survive without you. They could also become lost and you won't be able to find them when you return home.

If you'll be staying in a shelter, keep in mind not all of them allow animals, so seek out animal-friendly public shelters, or speak with friends or family outside your immediate area who you and your pets could stay with for a short time if necessary.

It's also a good idea to keep a list of pet-friendly hotels in case you can't find a shelter that accepts animals. Also talk with animal shelters and veterinarians in the area to find out if they board pets in emergency situations.

4. **Create a plan in the event you're not home when disaster strikes** — If you can't get back to your home, who will care for your pets? Speak with nearby friends and neighbors and develop a strategy to look out for each other's pets in case one of you isn't home in an emergency.

That person will need a key or other means of access to your home, an idea of where to find your pet once inside, and he or she should also be comfortable handling your animal.

Agree ahead of time on a location where you can meet to retrieve your pet or arrange for the person to provide temporary shelter.

5. **Display rescue alert stickers** — A rescue alert sticker, placed in full view on a front door or window (or wherever the main access to your home is), can be used to alert rescue workers to the number and type of pets inside.

Include your pet's name and your phone number so you can be easily contacted. If you evacuate your home with your pets, write "evacuated" on the rescue sticker so emergency responders know everyone is accounted for, including your pets.

6. **Keep a photo of your pet handy** — If your pet gets lost, a photo can be invaluable to bringing her home. Be sure the photo is current (within the last year at least), and keep a copy in your wallet or purse as well as in your emergency kit.

What's Your Plan to Care for Your Pet in an Emergency?

The time to think about it is now. If you've never experienced a natural or man-made disaster that has driven you from your home, you might feel as though "it will never happen to me."

But disaster can strike anywhere, at any time. Just a bit of preparation can mean the difference between survival and the alternative for all the members of your household.

Always plan to take your pet with you if you evacuate. You really have no way of knowing how long you'll be gone, and if staying in your home isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pet, either.

There will be few times in the life of your beloved companion that he will need you more than in the event of a disaster.

Sources and References

¹ [ASPCA](#)