

Emergency Preparedness for Dogs

Introduction

We now live in a different world than we did before September 11, 2001. Today, we are more aware that we have a personal responsibility for the safety of our loved ones, including our dogs.

Our society benefits from dogs in many different ways. Dog owners, a group that includes 31.6 percent of U.S. households, benefit from an improved quality of life thanks to their pets. In turn, dogs depend on their owners for well-being and safety. That's why it's important to make emergency plans for your dogs.

This publication demonstrates two phases of emergency management—mitigation and preparedness—established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. These phases can be applied in the care of your dog during times of natural or man-made disaster.

Mitigation

Mitigation measures will help avoid or reduce the impact of disasters for your dog. The following are some measures that can be taken to prevent losing your dog in a disaster.

- Make sure your dog wears a properly fitted collar that includes current identification, license, and rabies tags.
 - An appropriate identification tag should include your name, address, and phone number. In addition, put a temporary identification tag on your dog with the phone number of an out-of-state relative or friend. There is a good chance the phones may not work after a disaster. More permanent forms of identification include tattoos and microchips.
 - If your dog normally wears a choker collar,

keep a leather or nylon collar in your disaster kit. Do not keep a choker on a dog since your dog could get caught on something and possibly strangle itself to death. In addition, keep a properly fitting dog harness and leash in your disaster kit to be used when you exercise your dog. A frightened dog can slip out of a collar, but not a harness.

- Make sure you have several current pictures of your dog to use for identification in case your dog gets lost during the disaster.

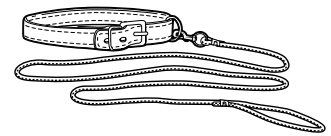


- Include pictures of any distinguishing marks that would make it easier to identify your dog.
- Include yourself in some of the pictures in case you have to show proof of ownership.
- Laminate the pictures with a permanent plastic in case it rains.
- Send duplicates of the pictures to your out-of-state relative or friend.
- Make sure you know all your dog's favorite hiding places.
- Make a current list of the places you can get food, boarding space, and health care for your dog in an emergency.
- Review all dog-related laws to determine who is responsible for what actions.
- Practice evacuating your family and dog until you can evacuate within a few minutes. Everybody in the family should participate, including your dog. **Do not leave your dog behind if you evacuate your home.** Most dogs cannot survive on their own. Therefore, leaving dogs behind, even if you try to create a safe place for them, is likely to result in their being lost, injured, or worse.
- Practice transporting your dog in and out of its crate and your vehicle.
- Prepare a disaster kit for each dog. Kits should be easy to retrieve and kept in rodent and insect-proof containers. Check the contents of the disaster kits twice a year, rotate all foods into use, and replace with fresh food every two months. The following are some items that you should have in dog disaster kits.
 - Extra collars, harnesses, tags, and leashes. Muzzles, which can also be made from gauze rolls, may be needed if your dog becomes agitated and aggressive during the confusion. Plastic airline crates or wire collapsible crates may be used to temporarily confine dogs following a disaster.

Preparedness

Start by developing an effective family disaster plan to reduce the impact of a manmade or natural disaster, then add specific plans for your dog. The following are some tips that will reduce the risk to your dog.

- Keep your dog's vaccinations current, and have the records handy. Most boarding kennels require proof of current vaccinations before accepting a dog.
- Train your dog for obedience. A well-behaved dog is easier to handle in an emergency and a welcomed guest.
- Familiarize your dog with its transport crate (plastic airline crate or wire collapsible crate) before an emergency. Make sure the crate is large enough for food and water and has enough space for your dog to stand up, turn around, and lie down comfortably. The crate should be a source of comfort, not stress.
- Current pictures of your dog in case you become separated during a disaster.
- A list of telephone numbers of relatives and friends outside your area.
- A list of places you can get food, boarding kennel space, and health care for your dog in an emergency.



- A list of motels and hotels in communities outside your area that will accept dogs in an emergency.
- A list of animal shelters or animal rescue organizations in your area in case your dog is missing after a disaster.
- Copies of all your dog's current vaccinations, health, and ownership records.



- Extra dog food. Store at least a week's supply of the food your dog likes to eat. Avoid diet changes to reduce the possibility of digestive upsets. Store the dry food in sturdy containers and do not use canned food that has been opened and not refrigerated. Include a manual can opener and a spoon to scoop and/or mix food.
- A supply of drinking water. You should have at least a week's supply of drinking water for each dog in your household. Store the water in a cool, dark location, and make sure to rotate it every two months so it remains fresh.

- Extra food and water bowls for each dog in case the ones normally used are lost.
- Scooper, paper towels, newspapers, plastic bags, and cleaners to handle your dog's waste.
- A first aid kit. This kit should only include materials you know how to use. Consult a veterinarian if your dog has a problem that you know nothing about. Useful items for a dog's first-aid kit include:
 - Dog first aid book
 - Bandaging materials
 - Antiseptic wipes and ointments
 - Tweezers
 - Scissors
 - Latex gloves
- Regular medications. If your dog is on long-term medication, keep at least a two-week supply or current copy of your dog's prescription on hand.
- Blankets and toys that are familiar to your dog.

Conclusion

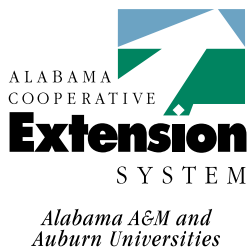
The importance of dogs in the United States is evidenced by an increasing appreciation of dogs as human companions. This is partially reflected by an increase in the revenue the pet industry generates. In the mid-1990s, this industry was estimated to generate between \$20-30 billion per year.

Our society benefits from the improved quality of life dog owners receive from living with dogs that are considered companions, confidantes, and health facilitators. Therefore, it is critical that we protect ourselves, our family, and our pets from disasters. Remember that the best disaster preparedness for dogs starts with our own personal protection and safety.



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