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# Emergency Plans for Pets

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Disasters are devastating. They change daily routines, create financial concerns about damaged or lost property, and can displace entire families. Losing a pet is also devastating, but when combined with a disaster, pet owners suffer greater emotional trauma in an already tragic situation. To help people cope with losing pets during disasters, the federal government has enacted a public law, commonly called the PETS Act.

## PETS Act of 2006

The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act of 2006 became public law on October 6, 2006, as a result of thousands of pets killed, lost, and/or permanently separated from their owners during Hurricane Katrina. Statutes of the PETS Act . . .

1. mandate that state and local emergency preparedness authorities include provisions for people with household pets and service animals in their emergency plans to qualify for grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
2. authorize FEMA to provide funding to help develop or renovate emergency shelters to accommodate people with pets and service animals, but does not provide specific funds designated for that purpose.
3. direct FEMA to include expenses related to pets and service animals under their cost-sharing programs with states and local communities during major disasters.

## Types of Emergencies

It is important for citizens to be familiar with the types of emergencies or disasters that could happen in their locale. Some disasters are long-term and take years for

full recovery. However, short-term emergencies can be just as devastating to a pet owner and can be disruptive to a pet's routine. Examples of localized disasters might include fires, tornadoes, floods, severe winter storms, ice storms, no water, extended power outages, traffic crashes, chemical spills, explosions, disease outbreak, civil unrest, and/or terrorist acts.

## Have a Plan in Place

It is important for every home, business, and school to have an emergency plan in place for the health and security of the inhabitants. It is equally important to have a similar plan for household pets and service animals. Having an emergency plan in place is crucial to pet survival during an emergency or disaster. Each family member should know the emergency plan for the pets in the family. Get prepared by making a list of pet-friendly places such as homes of relatives or friends, hotels, emergency shelters, boarding facilities, or veterinary offices.

Prepare a pet emergency kit. Include a list of supplies and contact information for the person responsible for each pet in the event of an evacuation. Put all supplies in an accessible location, storing smaller items in covered totes or other closed containers that are easy to carry and accessible at a moment's notice. Practice the evacuation plan as a family so everyone will know what to do if an emergency occurs. Here is an emergency supply checklist for pets:

- Pet carriers or crates. Allow one per pet. The carrier or crate should be secure to prevent a pet from escaping, and large enough for the pet to stand and lie down comfortably. (Note: pillowcases can be used to safely transport cats or reptiles in emergencies.)

- Collars, leashes, and/or harnesses. Attach identification tags to each collar or harness. ID tags should display the owner's cell phone number as well as the phone number of a relative or friend outside the owner's community who can locate you.
- Food and water bowls. Stainless steel or unbreakable bowls are good options.
- Water and dry or canned food. Plan enough water and food for five days; pack a manual can opener if necessary, or purchase pull-tab canned food.
- Blankets, towels, pet beds, or animal bedding.
- A litter box and litter.
- Paper towels, spray cleaner, and trash bags.
- Bags to pick up your animal's waste.
- Toys and treats.
- A brush or other pet grooming tools.
- A first aid kit and first aid book for pets.
- Other miscellaneous supplies specific to your pets' needs and preferences.
- Container(s) to carry everything.
- Pet medical records, medications, and microchip records. Put records and medications in a waterproof container.
- Pet photos and descriptions. Keep photos and descriptions current, making note of any unusual markings, scars, or abnormalities to make it easier to identify your pet should it get separated from you. Keep these in a waterproof container.
- Information about your pet. Include current vaccination records, medical conditions and medications taken, behavioral problems, feeding schedules, and the veterinarian's phone number.

The most important thing you can do to protect your pets during an emergency is to take them with you. They rely upon you for food, water, shelter, and safety. In some emergency situations it may be impossible for pet owners to take their pets with them. Be as responsible as possible to protect your pets' safety and to provide their daily needs if you should become separated. Having an emergency plan that includes pets can help ensure their safety and help them stay a part of your family long after the emergency has passed.

### Other Pet Safety Resources

Michigan State University Animal Legal & Historical Center: [www.animallaw.info/statutes/stusfd-2006pl109\\_308.htm](http://www.animallaw.info/statutes/stusfd-2006pl109_308.htm)

Tri-State (Southwest Ohio, Northern Kentucky, and Southeast Indiana) County Animal Response Team: [www.tristatecart.com](http://www.tristatecart.com)

Best Friends Animal Society Emergency Response: [network.bestfriends.org/groups/emergencyresponse/default.aspx](http://network.bestfriends.org/groups/emergencyresponse/default.aspx)

Ready America: [www.ready.gov/america/getakit/pets.html](http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/pets.html)

Ohio Department of Health, Zoonotic Disease Program: [www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/dis/zoonoses/zoomain1.aspx](http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhPrograms/dis/zoonoses/zoomain1.aspx)

Ohio Veterinary Medical Association: [www.ohiovma.org](http://www.ohiovma.org)

American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

Doctors Foster and Smith First Aid and Emergency Care: [www.peteducation.com/category.cfm?c=2+1677](http://www.peteducation.com/category.cfm?c=2+1677)

Partnership for Animal Welfare: [www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip\\_FirstAid.php](http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_FirstAid.php)

American Humane Association: [www.americanhumane.org/protecting-animals/adoption-pet-care/safety/preparing-for-disaster.html](http://www.americanhumane.org/protecting-animals/adoption-pet-care/safety/preparing-for-disaster.html)

### References

Colorado Veterinary Medical Foundation. *Animal Emergency Management Program*. 10 Dec. 2010. <[cvmf.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=24](http://cvmf.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=24)>

GovTrack.us. *H.R. 3858: Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006*. 6 Oct. 2006. 10 Dec. 2010. <[www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h109-3858&tab=summary](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h109-3858&tab=summary)>

*Tri-State County Animal Response Team*. 10 Dec. 2010. <[www.tristatecart.com](http://www.tristatecart.com)>

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