

PROTECT YOUR PETS

Proper planning before a hurricane could save your life and that of your pet. If you live in an area which must be evacuated, you must make preparations for your family and your pets before the threat of a storm.

Be a Responsible Pet Owner

It would be foolish to attempt to “ride out” a hurricane when an evacuation is ordered for your area...some people have tried and died. It is understandable that some people would not wish to leave their pets if evacuation becomes necessary; but other pet owners evacuate and leave their pets behind. You can protect your pets and, at the same time, your neighbors, by playing your part in an emergency. No amount of government assistance or available volunteer help could substitute for preparation and self-help. Each person looking out for his/her pet provides the only practical volunteer force. Pets should not be left in an empty house or let loose. To prepare your pet for a hurricane, follow these steps:

Advance Preparations

_____ **Acquire** a pet carrier for each pet in your household. These carriers should be either metal or plastic construction; cardboard carriers will fall apart if they get wet. Carriers should be large enough for your pet to stand up and turn around, but still small enough for you, with the help of other family members, to load into your vehicle. Your pet should be comfortable in the carrier since it may need to be confined for several hours daily, for four or five days.

_____ **Train** your pet to confinement in the carrier. Plastic carriers can be taken apart and used as a bed at the start of training. Dangerous animals must have escape-proof cages.

_____ **Make** sure that your pet vaccines are up to date. Your pet will likely be exposed to other pets and should not endanger these, nor be unprotected from diseases which they may carry. The necessary vaccines are:

- DOGS – Rabies, Distemper, Hepatitis, Leptospira, Parvovirus, and Bordatella (cough vaccine).
- CATS - Rabies, Distemper, Calicivirus, Pneumonitis, Feline Leukemia.

_____ **Put** your pet’s vaccination papers in a waterproof plastic bag. You will need these to be permitted into a boarding kennel.

_____ **Pack** a box or plastic garbage bag with your [Pet Survival Kit](#) for ready evacuation.

_____ **Mark** all your pet's belongings (carrier, dishes, scoop, can opener, food container, etc.) with an adhesive label and waterproof ink or indelible pencil. Include your pet's name, your name, address, phone number, and alternate phone number (friend or relative living outside this area).

_____ **Be sure** that all pets wear identification at all times. A snugly fitted leather collar with attached County license tag and/or rabies vaccination tag could be the means of returning lost pets. Breakaway collars are not likely to stay on a lost cat. An added precaution against loss of a pet is an attached metal tag with your pet's name, your name, address, phone number, and alternate phone number. Hasty identification of a pet could be waterproof ink or pencil markings inside a leather collar or even adhesive tape.

_____ **Survey** your home for a safe place in the event that you do not have to evacuate during a storm. A small room (utility or bath), or hallway in the center of the house, away from windows, is usually safest. Strong structures can provide protection from falling debris.

_____ **Be prepared** to evacuate should it become necessary. Decide well in advance where you will go. If you have friends or relatives outside of the storm area, you may wish to go with your pets. You will have 24-48 hours notice of a possible hurricane. The roads will be crowded and the hurricane could change direction, so leave early and closely monitor weather information. You will need 36-48 hours to evacuate out of the County so plan to leave when a Hurricane Watch is issued.

_____ **Make** arrangements ahead of time to board your pets at a structurally sound boarding kennel or check with your veterinary clinic. Please remember **PETS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN AMERICAN RED CROSS SHELTERS.** If you plan on going to a motel plan ahead and see if the motel will accept pets.

_____ **If you** wish to have your pet with you, upon evacuation, you may: (1) stay with friends or family members in a safe area; or (2) make reservations at a hotel which allows pets. It would be wise to call for information at the earliest possible time. Large pets may be denied admission in some hotels, boarding facilities, or even with friends. It is essential to make prior arrangements.

_____ **Drive** the route to the boarding kennel, hotel, or friend's home so that you are familiar with alternate routes, which are less likely to be crowded with traffic.

_____ **Have** a full tank of gas if there is any likelihood of a hurricane in this area.

_____ **Know** where emergency veterinary care can be had and where lost pets may be located, if found.

At the Time of the Hurricane

As a general rule, there will be 24-48 hours notice of a possible hurricane in this area. If you have made your preparations, you should be ready to:

_____ **Confirm** your accommodations for your pet and for yourself.

_____ **Load** your prepared supplies and those of your pet, into your vehicle, if you are to evacuate.

_____ **Secure** your home.

_____ **Walk** your pet on a leash.

_____ **Do not** leave pets outdoors or tied up. Take them inside or evacuate them.

_____ **Cover** caged birds, kennel dogs, cats, and other exotic pets, and load them into your car for evacuation, or place them in the pre-selected safe area of the house. If you do not have to evacuate, fill bathtubs, boats, barrels, and as many available containers with water for drinking and cooking. Swimming pool water can be used to flush toilets or to wash and bathe. Extra chlorine will be needed to shock pools every few days.

REMEMBER – Electricity will be off, well pumps will not work, city water will likely be contaminated. Clean water can be sterilized for people or animal consumption by adding two drops of chlorine to one quart of water and let stand for 30 minutes.

If you are to evacuate:

_____ **Take** your pet to the prearranged facility by your chosen route.

If you MUST evacuate without your pets:

_____ **Leave** dry, unappealing food for them. Do not leave large dogs, small cats, dogs, or birds together. Leave non-spill containers of water for each pet. Birds need an automatic feed dispenser.

_____ **Do not** release pets during a hurricane for any reason.

After the Hurricane

Recovery from a hurricane will start as soon as the rain and wind stop. The first step is the clearing of debris on roads to permit access to the damaged area. This could take three to seven days. Full recovery may not occur for six months to a year, or more.

_____ **Since** kennel facilities which accepted your pet will be overcrowded and understaffed, it is imperative that you reclaim your pet as quickly as possible.

_____ **People** and pets who stayed with friends during the storm should appreciate the strain which their presence puts on their hosts. They should leave as soon as possible. During their stay, they should act the part of “perfect guest” and help the host/hostess.

_____ **If** you have to leave your pets at home, it is **URGENT** that you check on them as soon as you are allowed into the area.

_____ **Do not** release pets after a hurricane even in their own yards. Familiar scents will have been washed away, and they will likely get lost. Be sure to check fences before letting pets out.

_____ **Be alert** for rotted substances which your pet may find when released into your yard.

_____ **Since** the number of “LOST” pets will very likely far exceed the available temporary or permanent homes, it is essential that you make every effort to find your pet and assume your responsibility.

“Pet Survival Kit”

- Picture of Pet (current)
- Collar with proper ID and rabies tag/license
- Vaccination papers- Make sure your pets have had all their shots within the past 12 months. Pet shelter will require proof of vaccinations.
- Leash
- Carrier or cage

- Covers for bird cages
- Water/food bowls
- Ample food supply (at least two weeks)
- Non electric can opener
- Newspapers, cat litter, scoop, plastic trash bags for handling waste
- Proper ID on all belongings
- All daily medication (monthly heartworm prevention can be given a few days early, if evacuating)
- Any special instructions regarding care of your pet