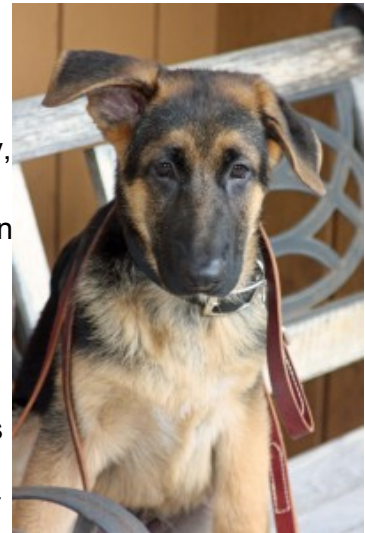


Emergency Preparedness for Families with Pets

Bolton Veterinary Hospital

An emergency situation may be as broad-reaching as a natural disaster, or as simple as a gas leak or minor flooding that requires a handful of families to leave their homes for a few hours. Whether the situation is catastrophic or a temporary interruption of normalcy, anyone can be affected by an emergency situation. Take the list below into consideration as you plan for “saving the whole family” in case of an emergency.



1. Consider the possibilities in advance and form a plan. Is your area subject to flooding, hurricanes, or fires? Might you be snowbound by a blizzard, with roads left impassable for a few days to follow? Is there a possibility you or a family member could be unexpectedly hospitalized, with nobody left at home to take care of your pets for hours or days in a row? We cannot predict every possibility, but we can do our best to plan for the likeliest of scenarios.

2. In case of the need to evacuate, plan to take your animals with you. An evacuation that is expected to last a few hours can suddenly develop into a much more complex situation, potentially leaving pets unattended at home for days or even weeks.

Can you fit all of your pets in your vehicle if you are planning to evacuate?

Are leashes easy for anyone to find quickly if needed?

Do you have pet carriers for all small pets in the household?

Are your pet carriers assembled and easy to find when needed?

Can you quickly grab enough food, water, and bowls to bring along for your pets?

Do you always have at least a week's supply of any medications your pet requires?

Would you also need to bring trash bags? A can opener? A litter box? A muzzle?

3. Plan where you might bring your pets in the event of an evacuation. A pet-friendly hotel chain or relatives' homes are good options, as emergency shelters for people often cannot accommodate animals. In the event of an evacuation, you may be required to travel as much as 90 miles from the disaster site!

4. Place a sticker on your front door or window indicating how many pets are in the home in the event you are not home when an emergency situation occurs and rescue personnel must find your pets in your home.

5. Ask a neighbor or a nearby friend or relative if they can take responsibility for your pets if you are not home. Better yet, have them sign and keep a letter that states they have permission to authorize veterinary care for your pets.

6. Have permanent or secure identification on your pets. A microchip is a secure, permanent, and reliable means of identifying your pets of any species if they are separated from you in an emergency. Collar tags including your mobile phone number are useful as long as they are not separated from the pet.

7. Have important contact information written down in case internet or cell phone service is unavailable. 911 systems may be overwhelmed in the case of a natural disaster, so having numbers for local resources such as community centers (a high school or library might serve as an emergency shelter), town police and fire department numbers, nearby relatives' contact information, and of course, your veterinarian's phone number.

8. Don't forget your own needs! You cannot continue to take care of others if you have not prepared for yourself as well.

We hope this list has helped you to begin planning for an emergency, but these ideas are just a starting point. You can read the AVMA's full brochure, "Saving the Whole Family," at http://www.smartma.org/document/saving_family_brochure.pdf

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