



SAVE THE WHOLE FAMILY

Disaster preparedness for households with pets

Disasters can vary widely in scale and severity, causing short- and long-term impacts. Some disasters may happen without warning, while others are more predictable. No matter where you live, disasters and emergencies can and will occur.

It's essential to make a personal plan, prepare everything you need to execute that plan—such as putting together an evacuation kit for every member of your household (including all pets)—and stay informed of local animal disaster plans. By being prepared, you are helping ensure that first responders can focus on emergencies and that you can be self-sufficient during the first few days after disaster strikes and before help may arrive.

Common hazards include:

- Hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, and other severe or cold weather events
- Earthquakes
- Floods
- Human-made disasters (examples include chemical spills, nuclear incidents, and terrorism)
- Fires

Familiarize yourself with the common hazards most likely to occur in your area. For more information about hazards and general personal preparedness visit [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).

PREPAREDNESS TIP

Take all disaster advisories or warnings seriously.

MAKE A PLAN

Have an evacuation plan in place and practice the plan prior to a disaster. Because some disasters occur with little to no warning and conditions can change rapidly, it's critical to know your plan before disaster strikes. Consider these points when forming a plan:

What to do at the first sign of trouble

- Know what to do when the situation turns dangerous.
- Bring all pets indoors at the first sign of a potential disaster situation so all pets are accounted for if you need to evacuate.

Transportation and temporary housing

- Locate and pre-arrange an evacuation site outside the impacted area. Remember, many human shelters do not accept pets and temporary disaster animal shelters are not ideal for most pets—these should be considered only after you've explored all other sheltering options.
- Know how you [plan to transport your pets](#) during an evacuation event, and practice evacuating with all pets and their supplies.

Necessary equipment and information

- Assemble an animal evacuation kit. Keep animal equipment where rescue personnel, neighbors, and friends can easily find it.
- Be ready to reunite in case you are separated from your pet. [Ensure your pet has proper identification](#) and that microchip and other ID information is up to date.
- [Collect records](#) to help care for your pet during a disaster, such as vaccination records, medical records, and proof of ownership, and know how to access them.
- Consider including a signed veterinary medical treatment authorization with your evacuation kit. This will help your veterinarian provide care if your pet must be treated during your absence.

Emergency contacts

- Designate a friend or neighbor to care for your pets in the event a disaster occurs when you are not at home.
- Provide your friend or neighbor a letter signed by you that will release them from responsibility if a pet is injured during an evacuation and that tells them the location of your evacuation kit.

PREPAREDNESS TIP

Before a disaster or emergency ever takes place, you can post notices on entrances to your home that detail the number of animals inside to assist responders during a disaster event. This can help others save your animals if you aren't home or are otherwise unable to share that information with responders. If you live in an apartment, make sure your animals are on record with management.

PREPARE TO EXECUTE YOUR PLAN

Once you have your plan outlined, prepare to execute that plan by pre-gathering items and records, double-checking your pet's identification, and making lists of contacts in the event of an emergency.

Transportation and temporary housing

- Have a leash, collar, and/or harness ready for each pet.
- Have a collapsible cage or airline-approved carrier **for each pet**. Having enough carriers to accommodate each of your pets facilitates a quick evacuation. Bedding should be such that it is easy to clean or is disposable. Towels and blankets are also helpful to cover cages for privacy and comfort. Clearly label each carrier with your identification and contact information.
- Carriers may need to be used as temporary housing in addition to transport.
- Cat carriers should be large enough to hold a small litter box and two small dishes and still allow your cat enough room to lie down comfortably and stand to use the litter box.
- Dog kennels or collapsible cages should be large enough to hold two no-spill bowls and still allow your dog enough room to stand up and lie down comfortably.
- Familiarize your animals with evacuation procedures and cages/carriers. Take the cage/carrier out several times a year and put toys, blankets and treats inside. By doing this, you reinforce positive feelings associated with the animal carrier.
- To decrease stress and the risk of disease transmission, keep animals from different households separated as much as possible during evacuation and while away from home.

Necessary equipment

Be ready for disasters by preparing a pet evacuation kit. Don't wait for an emergency situation—gather the items you'll need now, and put them in an easy-to-carry, waterproof container close to an exit. Your evacuation kit should include food and medicine, first aid and sanitation items, important documents, and other travel supplies. [See AVMA's pet evacuation kit checklist](#) to make sure you pack everything you'll need.

Remember to replace food, water, and medications as often as needed to maintain quality and freshness and in accordance with expiration dates. If medications must be stored outside of the kit due to temperature requirements, such as refrigeration, write down the name of the medication and its location, and include that note in the kit.

PREPAREDNESS TIP

Discuss emergency first aid procedures and administration of any medications with your veterinarian, and consult them for advice on what else to include in your evacuation kit.



PET EVACUATION KIT

Be prepared for a disaster with a pet evacuation kit. Assemble the kit well in advance of any emergency and store in an easy-to-carry, waterproof container close to an exit.

Food and medicine

- 3-7 days' worth of food*
- Hand-operated can opener for canned food
- Scoop or spoon to dispense food
- Two-week supply of medicine*
- At least 7 days' supply of water*
- Collapsible feeding dish and water bowl

**These items must be rotated and replaced to ensure they don't expire*

First aid kit

- Antibiotic ointment
- Bandage tape and scissors
- Cotton bandage rolls
- Flea and tick prevention
- Isopropyl alcohol/alcohol prep pads
- Latex gloves
- Saline solution
- Towel and washcloth
- Tweezers

Sanitation

- Litter, litter pan, and scoop (shirt box with plastic bag works well for pan)
- Houstraining pads
- Dog poop disposal bags
- Newspaper, paper towels, and trash bags
- Household chlorine bleach or disinfectant

- Liquid dish soap
- Hand sanitizer

Important documents

- Identification papers including proof of ownership and microchip number, if applicable
- Medical records and medication instructions
- Emergency contact list, including veterinarian and pharmacy
- Photo of your pet (preferably with you)
- Maps of the local area and evacuation routes

Travel supplies

- Crate or pet carrier labeled with your contact information
- Extra collar/harness with ID tags and leash
- Flashlight, extra batteries
- Muzzle
- Thick gloves to prevent scratches

Comfort items

- Favorite toys and treats
- Extra blanket or familiar bedding
- Tie-out stakes

Other items you may want to remember

- _____
- _____



Necessary information

Pet identification, records, and emergency contacts will help ensure reunion with your pet as soon as possible following a disaster. Keeping these items up-to-date and organized are critical parts of disaster preparedness.

Pet identification

If you become separated from a pet, identification, both permanent and temporary, is essential when it comes to improving your chances of reuniting.

Temporary identification for the pet, such as on their collar, leash, or carrier, should provide your name, home address, phone number, and the phone number of an emergency contact, such as someone out-of-state with whom you will be in contact during or soon after the disaster or evacuation. If possible, also include your veterinarian's name, location, and phone number.

PREPAREDNESS TIP

A microchip is the best way to permanently identify your pet and dramatically increases your chances for reunification should you become separated during a disaster.

Microchips:

Only a microchip provides permanent identification that cannot fall off, be easily removed, or become impossible to read. Microchips are the best ID option for cats as many cats do not wear collars or wear break-away collars for safety.

You must register your pet's microchip in a database with your contact information so you can be contacted when your lost pet is found. Also, remember to keep your contact information up to date whenever you move or change phone numbers.

If your pet has a microchip, contact the company yearly and after each time you move to make sure your pet's information is registered and up to date.

Collars and tags:

There are infinite options for collars and tags for pet. Your pet should **always** wear a collar with an ID tag and rabies and licensing information, depending on your local rabies control laws. Some tags use scannable QR codes that allow for a significant amount of information to be accessible to anyone who finds a lost pet, and there are smart tags available that even have GPS capability. Disposable identification collars can also be used if there are no other options available. A waterproof pouch attached to the collar with identification information inside is also an option.

PREPAREDNESS TIP

Your pet should always wear a collar and ID tag, and be microchipped in case their collar or tags become lost.

Records and documents

Make photocopies or save electronic files of important documents:

- A list of each of your pets and their species, breed, age, sex, color, and distinguishing characteristics
- A list of each pet's vaccinations, including the date they were administered
- Current rabies certificate
- Any current medical conditions or allergies
- A list of each pet's medications, including the drug name, dosage, and frequency of dosing
- Registration information, adoption papers, and/or proof of purchase
- Microchip information, including the lookup number

More tips to help reunite you with a pet:



- Keep current photographs of your pets in the evacuation kit for identification purposes, including some photos of you with your pets to help you reclaim your pet(s) if you are separated.
- Consider preparing waterproof “Lost Pet” signs with your pets photo, your name, and your contact information to use in case your pet is lost.

Emergency contacts

Prepare your emergency contact list now, before disaster strikes. You may need it during a disaster or while evacuating, and rescue personnel responding to a disaster affecting your pets may need it, too. Keep a copy with your evacuation kit.

Include addresses and 24-hour contact numbers, if available. If you use the Medical ID function on your mobile device, be sure one of the contacts is aware of your pet disaster plan.

- Numbers where you can be reached
- Location of your prearranged evacuation sites
- Local emergency contact person if you aren’t available
- Out-of-state emergency contact person
- Your veterinarian’s name, clinic name, and phone number
- Alternate veterinarian (30-90 miles away, provides boarding)
- Boarding facility (local)
- Boarding facility (30-90 miles away)
- Hotels that allow pets (90-mile radius)
- Local animal control agency
- Local police department
- Local fire department
- Local public health department
- Local Red Cross chapter
- List of internet and social media “lost and found” animal sites
- Local municipal animal shelter, local humane society, or local society for the prevention of cruelty to animals (SPCA)

 My PET EMERGENCY numbers		 My PET EMERGENCY numbers	
Boarding kennel	Pet sitter	Veterinarian	Poison Control
Shelters/animal control	Alternate care taker information	Animal control	Police (non-emergency)
			Fire department (non-emergency)
		For more disaster preparedness tips visit avma.org/Disaster	

Directions

CUT along the dotted lines
 FOLD along the solid lines

STAY INFORMED

Stay informed before, during, and after an event so you can respond promptly and appropriately to changing conditions.

- Public safety officials use timely and reliable systems to alert you about emergencies. **Be familiar with the Wireless Emergency Alerts and Emergency Alert Systems in your area**, and check the settings on your mobile device to ensure you can receive alerts.
- **Identify local animal welfare and veterinary organizations** likely to be involved in a disaster response (e.g., animal control, municipal shelter, private/non-profit shelters, veterinary clinics) and their role in the community (e.g., primary disaster response, lost pets, emergency veterinary care). Consider “following” these groups on social media during a disaster as they will provide animal-specific information.
- **Consider receiving training and/or volunteering** in animal disaster response in your community.



Explore more disaster preparedness information and tools at [avma.org/Disaster](https://www.avma.org/Disaster)