

When disaster strikes, don't be caught unprepared.

Emergencies come in many forms. Some may require a brief absence, while others may call for permanent evacuation from your home. The following steps can help you protect your animal companions.

1. Display a rescue alert sticker

Affix these easy-to-use stickers to your front door to let rescue workers know that pets are inside your home. There should be space on the sticker for you to fill in the type and number of pets in your household and contact information for your veterinarian. E-mail beprepared@aspca.org to request a free pet emergency sticker.

2. Arrange a safe haven

In the event of evacuation, you'll need a safe haven for your animal companions. Note that Red Cross disaster shelters will not accept pets because of health and safety regulations, so it is imperative that you determine ahead of time where you will bring your pets.

- Contact your veterinarian for a list of preferred boarding kennels.
- Find out if your local animal shelter provides emergency shelter or foster care for pets.
- Identify local hotels or motels that accept pets.
- Ask friends and relatives outside your immediate area if they would be willing to take in your pet in the event of an emergency.

3. Keep emergency supplies and a pet traveling kit on hand

Be sure to stock the following:

- Pet first-aid kit and guidebook.
- Two-week supply of pet food and water.
- Disposable litter trays (aluminum roasting pans are great) and litter/paper towels.
- Feeding dishes.
- Leash.
- Photocopies of your pet's medical records and waterproof container with two-week supply of any medication your pet requires.
- Flashlight.
- Blanket (good for scooping up fearful pets).
- Photos of your pet, in case you are sepa-

rated and need to make "Lost" posters.

- Carrier, traveling case or "Evacsak" (similar to a pillowcase but insures safe transport), ideally one per pet.

4. Choose a designated caregiver

Invest time and thought in arranging for a temporary home for your pet in the event of an emergency. This temporary caregiver should live close to you and generally be home during the day while you are at work or have easy access to your home. Give a set of keys to this trusted individual. Consider a pet-owning neighbor with whom you can swap responsibilities.

- You'll need to choose a permanent caregiver as well, in the event that you become unable to resume care for your pet. Be sure to discuss your expectations and provide a trust for your pet's financial future. (For more information on trusts, contact your attorney or the ASPCA at (212) 876-7700 x4554.)

5. Be prepared for evacuation

- Store an emergency kit and leash as close to the exit of your home as possible.
- Make sure all pets wear collars and tags with up-to-date information, including pet's name, telephone number and any urgent medical needs. The ASPCA also recommends a more permanent form of identification, such as a microchip. This procedure is simple—a small electronic chip is implanted in your pet's shoulder area and can be read by a scanner at most animal shelters.
- Bring pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster.
- Call ahead to make arrangements for boarding your pet outside of the danger zone at the first sign of disaster.
- Should your animal become lost, it's important that you know where your local shelters and rescue organizations are. Start looking for a missing pet as soon as possible.

6. Take into account geography and climate

You'll need to plan accordingly if you live in an area prone to natural catastrophes,

such as tornadoes, earthquakes and floods.

- Locate rooms that offer safe havens—clear of hazards such as windows, flying debris, etc.—in advance. Utility rooms, bathrooms and basements are usually good choices.
- Access to fresh water is important. In areas that may lose electricity, fill up bathtubs and sinks ahead of time.
- In the event of flooding, select the highest location in your home or a room with counters or shelves in which your animal companions can take shelter.

7. Special considerations for other species

Birds

- Transport companion avians in a secure travel cage or carrier. Put a blanket over the cage in cold weather. In warmer months, carry a spray bottle to periodically moisten your bird's feathers.
- For proper identification, your bird should wear leg bands.
- A timed feeder will ensure that your bird eats regularly should you need to leave her unexpectedly.

Reptiles

- Snakes may be transported in pillow cases or lightweight plastic tanks, but you'll need to provide permanent and secure housing when they reach a safe haven.
- Bring along a heating pad and a bowl of water large enough for soaking.
- To safely transport lizards, follow the above guidelines for birds.

Small Animals

Transport small animals such as hamsters, gerbils, mice and guinea pigs in secure carriers with bedding materials, food and food bowls.