

## **Include your pets in your evacuation and disaster planning**

(ARA) - All too often when a disaster strikes, our four-legged friends are left to fend for themselves and sometimes end up lost, injured or killed. The best way to avoid this tragic scenario is to have a well-thought-out disaster plan that includes Fido, so you know where to go and what to take.

"Many public shelters that are set up for disaster victims don't accept pets so you need to find out in advance which shelters or hotels along your evacuation route will accept animals," says Lyman Munson, vice president of risk services for Fireman's Fund Insurance Company <http://disasteradvisor.ffido.com/microsite/>. "It is tragic, but people have actually died because they were ordered to evacuate a disaster area but stayed because they did not want to leave their pets."

With so many different potential disasters, advance planning is the best way for everyone to survive a catastrophe and get their lives back to normal as soon as possible.

Fireman's Fund offers the following tips to protect your pets in the event of a disaster:

### 1. Have a disaster plan

Put together a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians along your evacuation route and outside your area that might be able to shelter your pets in an emergency.

Talk to your vet, the local humane society or the local emergency management agency for information regarding community evacuation plans that include pets.

Make advance arrangements to have a friend or neighbor pick up your pets in the event you are not at home when a disaster strikes. And, plan where you will meet or how you will reach each other.

### 2. Make a grab-and-go disaster kit for your pets

Just as you should have a disaster kit for your family, containing important papers and other key items, you should prepare a similar kit for your pets. It should contain the following:

- Medication and medical records (including proof of rabies vaccination) in a waterproof container.
- Leashes, harnesses, crates and carriers for transporting your pet.
- A muzzle, if your pet requires one.
- Food and water for at least three days.
- Cat litter and litter box.
- Comfort toys.
- Recent photo of your pet in case you become separated.

- Name and phone number of your veterinarian.

### 3. If you must evacuate, take your pets

Be prepared to leave early; do not wait for an official evacuation as you might be ordered to leave your pets behind.

Make sure your pet is wearing up-to-date identification. Include the phone number of a friend or relative outside your area in case your pet gets lost and you cannot be reached. And mark the crate or carrier with similar information.

Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage or carrier.

### 4. After the disaster

Once you return to your home, do not allow your pets to roam loose right away. While you assess the damage, keep dogs on a leash and other animals in their carriers.

Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your pet may become disoriented. Pets can easily get lost in such situations, so give them some time to get used to their "new" surroundings. Be patient. Try to get your pets back into their normal routines as soon as possible, and be on the lookout for stress-related behavioral problems; if these persist, talk to your veterinarian.

"Planning for your pets ahead of time will relieve stress and help you and your family to focus on safety during and after a disaster," says Munson. "Safety should be your primary consideration."

#### **About Fireman's Fund Insurance Company**

Founded in 1863, Fireman's Fund Insurance Company is a premier property and casualty insurance company providing personal and commercial insurance products backed by industry-leading claims and risk management solutions. Fireman's Fund is a leader in high-net-worth, entertainment, and green insurance. Fireman's Fund is a member of the Allianz Group, one of the world's largest providers of property and casualty insurance, ranked 27th on Fortune's Global 500 list of the world's largest corporations.

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