



Mason County Division of Emergency Management

Pet Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies create danger for animals and their owners. Lack of preparation leads to unnecessary tragedy, human injury and economic loss. Pets are the number one reason people return to their homes before local authorities have declared it safe to do so, risking lives in the effort to save beloved pets. Mason County DEM encourages all pet owners to evacuate with their animals to prevent endangering human and animal lives. By remembering to include your pets as part of your family's emergency evacuation plan, you can avoid those last minute decisions that could endanger the safety of your family and pets.

TOP TEN LIST FOR PREPARING YOUR PETS

1. **Safe Places for Your Pet.** Evacuation shelters generally don't accept pets and for this reason it's important to plan ahead to ensure that your pets and family will have a safe place to stay. Research hotels and motels outside your immediate area for pet policies and ask friends and relatives outside the area if you and your pets can stay with them in case of a disaster.
2. **Proper Identification and Updated Vaccinations.** Having your pet licensed and micro-chipped can protect your pet and help identify them if they were to become lost. Also, keep your pet's vaccinations current, and keep the records handy.
3. **Leave Early and Take Your Pet.** One of the most important things to do if you are evacuating your home is to take your pets with you because you may be forced to stay away longer than anticipated. In addition, leave early and don't wait for mandatory evacuation orders because if emergency officials have to evacuate you, you might be told to leave your pets behind.
4. **In Case You're Away.** A disaster may strike when you're away from home. Make arrangements in advance with a trusted neighbor (who is comfortable with your pets and knows where in the home they are likely to be) to take them and meet you at a specified location.

5. **Large Animals.** If you have large animals or livestock, have enough trailers or travel containers available for all of them. If possible make arrangements with boarding facilities or a friend with a ranch in a different area to take in your large animals in the event of a disaster. Keep halters/ropes ready for each horse that includes the horse's name, your name/phone number and a separate emergency contact number. Also, keep a reserve supply of horse feed and water on hand that will last for at least 72 hours.
6. **Picture Perfect.** Have a photograph taken of you with your pets to show proof of ownership should you become separated.
7. **Pet Carriers.** Have pet carriers ready that are the correct sizes for each of your pets. Make sure each carrier is labeled with your contact information, should you become separated from your pet.
8. **Prepare an Emergency Kit.** Have a pet emergency kit prepared and ready for a disaster. This kit should have:
 - Three-plus days supply of food and food bowls, water and two weeks of your pet's medications.
 - Litter boxes with litter, if you have cats.
 - Extra leashes and collars.
 - Vaccination and medical records.
 - Photos and descriptions of each pet.
 - Pet first aid kit and pet first aid book.
 - Include a favorite toy. Your pet will "feel" better if they are able to play.
9. **Pet First Aid.** Attend a Pet First Aid class so that you are able to immediately care for your pet if you are unable to get them to a veterinarian right away.
10. **Emergency Numbers.** If you have to evacuate at the last minute and cannot take your pets, don't be a hero and return to the danger zone to try to rescue them. Contact the Mason County Sheriff's Office at 360-427-9670 ext 313 at let them know about your pet.

While the guidelines above are helpful, consider writing a list or plan for each pet. Then, have a practice drill. Does your emergency action plan work for you? Think about a fire situation; if you had just three minutes to get out of bed in the middle of the night and to get your pets, can you do it? Without panicking, see how long it would take you to get yourself and your pets out. Is it ten minutes? That might be fine if you have advance warning of an impending disaster, such as a flood or fire approaching your community, but for a house fire, ten minutes is too long.

Practice with your family; and also practice as individuals, because there is no guarantee that everyone will be at home when a disaster strikes. Discuss the plans with your children, and be sure they understand that their job is to follow instructions and exit the house, especially if the child is in the younger age bracket.

Transporting Your Pets

- Have one kennel or cage per pet. Mark the kennel with your name, address, phone and an alternate contact. Make sure kennels are large enough to allow your pet to stand up and turn around, and to accommodate the pet and food and water bowls.
- Familiarize your pets with sleeping in the kennel/cage. Kennels for cats should be large enough to accommodate a small litter box.
- Pillow cases will work for transporting cats in an emergency. Evac-Saks are much better and can be hung from doorknobs.
- Crates are good ways to transport your animal. However, they are useless for sheltering your animal or containing it outdoors. There is an unavoidable build up of heat inside the kennel. For long-term housing wire cages are much better. Do not forget to provide shade.
- Pets such as rabbits, rodents, ferrets, hedgehogs, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and others will have specific needs. Make sure you have appropriate travel cages, bedding, special foods, along with environmental controls for those pets needing special heat and humidity conditions.

As you prepare your pets' emergency plan and supplies kit remember:

- **Keep a supply** of newspapers, plastic bags, cleaners and disinfectants on hand to properly handle pet waste.
- **Know your pets' favorite hiding places.** Once the disaster strikes, you won't have time to look for them.
- **Obedience train your dog.** Being well-behaved may save its life during a disaster and make it a welcome guest in an emergency animal shelter or pet-friendly motel.
- **Familiarize your pet with riding in a vehicle.** This will make evacuating with your pet much easier.
- **Include an article of clothing with your scent on it in their supply kit.** If they can "smell your scent" they will probably do better when you are not with them.

During the Disaster Comfort Your Animals

Your animals will appreciate your calm presence and soft, comforting voice if they are stressed following a disaster or while evacuated, and you may find it comforting to spend time with them, too. Some animals may find toys, especially long-lasting chew toys, comforting.

What to Do When an All-Clear Sounds

- Once emergency officials have declared the end of the disaster and you and your pets return to your home, be careful about allowing your pets outdoors unattended and off-leash. The disaster may have altered familiar scents and landmarks and your pet could easily get confused and become lost.
- In addition, sharp objects, downed electric lines, fallen trees and other debris, or contaminated water could present real danger to your pet.
- If any animals are lost during the disaster, contact veterinarians, humane societies, pet shelters, and other facilities that might house animals. Be prepared to identify and document ownership when claiming lost livestock.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THE FOLLOWING LINKS:

- ASPCA, www.aspca.org
- The Humane Society, www.humanesociety.org
- *All Hazards*, Iowa State University, www.prep4agthreats.org/Natural-Disasters/index.php
- Red Rover, www.redrover.org
- Pet-Friendly Hotel Search, www.petswelcome.com

If you want to help take care of pets during a disaster in our area and set up an emergency pet shelter then consider joining the County Animal Response Team (CART). If residents have to evacuate their homes during a major disaster and go to an emergency shelter, CART members will set up and operate emergency pet shelters for pet owners to take their pets' to. For more information contact the Mason County Division of Emergency Management (DEM) at 360-427-7535 or visit the Mason CART Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mason-County-Animal-Response-Team-CART/563274787026011>

