



## POLK COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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### National Preparedness Month September 2010 - Pets

September is National Preparedness Month and Polk County Emergency Management is supporting this campaign to increase awareness and assist you in becoming as prepared as possible if an event occurs. Today's topic is: *what you need to know for your pets during an event.*

Pets are often full-fledged members of the family and any family emergency plan must include them to be truly complete. Many shelters will not permit animals (with the exception of registered service animals), so it is especially important that you have a plan for your pets in an event. **Always make sure your pets have current licenses and id tags!**

**During a disaster** there are several steps it is recommended you take:

- Bring your pets inside immediately.
- Have newspapers on hand for sanitary purposes. Feed the animals moist or canned food so they will need less water to drink.
- Animals have instincts about severe weather changes and will often isolate themselves if they are afraid. Bringing them inside early can stop them from running away. Never leave a pet outside or tied up during a storm. You should know your pets' hiding places so you can find them easily in the case of an evacuation.
- Separate dogs and cats. Even if your dogs and cats normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally. Keep small pets away from cats and dogs.
- In an emergency you may have to take your birds with you. Talk with your veterinarian or local pet store about special food dispensers that regulate the amount of food a bird is given. Make sure that the bird is caged and the cage is covered by a thin cloth or sheet to provide security and filtered light.

**After a disaster**

- If after a disaster you have to leave town, take your pets with you. Pets are unlikely to survive on their own.
- In the first few days after an event, leash your pets when they go outside. Always maintain close contact. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and your pet may become confused and lost. Also, snakes and other dangerous animals may be brought into the area in flood areas. Downed power lines are also a hazard for unleashed pets.

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- The behavior of your pets may change after an emergency. Normally quiet and friendly pets may become aggressive or defensive. Watch your pets closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water.

**In the case of an evacuation** plan how you will assemble your pets and anticipate where you will go. If you must evacuate take your pets with you, if practical. If it is not possible, leave the pets loose in the house with access to plenty of food and water and mark your door letting emergency workers know there are animals in the house, what type and size and a number where you can be contacted. Try to secure appropriate lodging in advance depending on the type and number of animals in your care. Consider family or friends outside your immediate area who would be willing and able to care for your pets in an emergency.

- Develop a buddy system. Plan with neighbors, friends or relatives to make sure that someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so. Talk with your pet care buddy about your evacuation plans and show them where you keep your pet's emergency supply kit. Also designate specific locations, one in your immediate neighborhood and one farther away, where you will meet in an emergency.
- Talk your pet's veterinarian about emergency planning for your pets. Discuss the types of things you should include in your pet's emergency supply kit. Get the names of vets or veterinary hospitals in other cities where you might need to seek temporary shelter. Also talk with your veterinarian about microchipping. If you and your pet are separated, this permanent implant for your pet and corresponding enrollment in a recovery database can help a veterinarian or shelter identify your animal. If your pet is microchipped, keeping your emergency contact information up to date and listed with a reliable recovery database is essential to you and your pet being reunited.
- Gather contact information for emergency animal treatment. Make a list of contact information and addresses of area animal control agencies including the Humane Society, Animal Rescue Services and emergency veterinarian hospitals. Keep one copy of these numbers with you and one copy in your pet's emergency supply kit.

**Create an emergency supply kit for your pets.** The following is a list of what you will need.

- Food. Keep at least three days of food in an airtight, waterproofed container.
- Water. Store at least three days of water specifically for your pets, in addition to water you need for yourself and your family.
- Medicines and medical records. Keep an extra supply of medicines your pet takes on a regular basis in a waterproof container.
- First aid kit. Talk to your veterinarian about what is most appropriate for your pet's emergency medical needs. Most kits should include cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors, antibiotic ointment, flea and tick prevention, latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol and saline solution. Include a pet first aid reference book.
- Collar with id tag or harness and leash. Your pet should wear a collar with its rabies tag and identification at all times. Include a backup leash, collar and ID tag in your pet's emergency supply kit.
- Important documents. Place copies of your pet's registration information, adoption papers, vaccination documents and medical records in a clean plastic bag or waterproof container and add them to your kit.
- Crate or other pet carrier. If you need to evacuate in an emergency situation have a crate ready to take with you for each pet.
- Sanitation. Include pet litter and litter box if appropriate, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household chlorine bleach to provide for your pet's sanitation needs. You can use

bleach as a disinfectant (dilute nine parts water to one part bleach), or in an emergency you can also use it to purify water. Use 8 drops of regular household bleach per gallon of water, stir well and let it stand 30 minutes before use. Do not use scented or color safe bleaches or those with added cleaners.

- A picture of you and your pet together. If you become separated from your pet during an emergency a picture of you and your pet together will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you in identifying your pet. Include detailed information about species, breed, age, sex, color, distinguishing characteristics and a phone number you can be reached at.
- Familiar items. Put favorite toys, treats or bedding in your kit. Familiar items can help reduce stress for your pet.

Consider making two kits. In one put everything your pets will need to stay where you are and make it on your own. The other should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you and your pets have to get away. Make sure everyone in your family is aware of where the kits are kept.

For more in-depth information on special situations please visit our website at <http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/EmergencyManagement/emergency-preparedness/be-informed/Default.aspx>.

For more information please visit the following websites:

<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/disaster-preparedness/>

[http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal\\_rescue/tips/disaster\\_preparedness\\_pets.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal_rescue/tips/disaster_preparedness_pets.html)

<http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/emergencymanagement/>

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