

## Getting Ready for Disasters

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Even though we don't like to think about it, disasters can happen to anyone. When I lived in Florida, Hurricane Katrina came ashore in my city of Aventura. It was only a Category One at that point, and I suffered no damage. However, there was potential for flooding and everyone was without power for a while. A year ago October, one of the many wildfires in California burned less than a mile away from my home. I chose to evacuate and had to decide what to take with me. Of course, my pets were my first concern.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a class on Disaster Preparedness and First Aid for Your Pet. Since I am a professional pet sitter, I felt the class would be very beneficial. I had attended earthquake disaster preparedness classes before, but never one specifically for pets.

The first steps in preparing for disaster are:

1. Put together an emergency supply kit.
2. Develop a plan for your family and pets.
3. Be informed about different types of emergencies and the appropriate responses.
4. Make sure your pet has appropriate identification.

The National Association of Pet Sitters offers a good Pet Disaster Preparedness Guide.

You should also have a Pet Emergency Supplies Kit. Watch a DogChannel video to find out what should be in your kit. If your pet is on any medication, include a supply and a copy of the prescription and instructions in your kit. Also, make sure you have a leash, muzzle, a copy of your pet's medical records, food, water, and dishes.

If you have small dogs or cats, it is a good idea to include pillowcases. They can be used to transport small animals safely and can also be used as a bandage if your pet is bleeding or for additional warmth. It was also suggested to keep a blanket in your car trunk for emergencies.

Something I learned that I had never thought of was to include a picture of yourself with your animals. In some disasters, you may be separated from your precious pets. You may need to relocate several hundred miles away while your pet goes to a shelter in a different area. To prove ownership, the picture is extremely helpful.

Our pet-sitting company requires all clients to sign a treatment authorization form in case something happens to their pet while they are away. Your veterinarian's contact information is included and if you want to authorize emergency service up to a certain dollar amount, you can. It is advisable to keep a copy with your pet's emergency kit.

I hope you and your pet never have to use a disaster preparedness kit, but if something does happen, you'll be more able to deal with the situation if you have planned and prepared. I know when I had to evacuate, I felt much less stress since I knew I could take care of myself and my cats for at least a few days.

- Read more Confessions of a Dog Sitter -