

## Disaster Preparation Checklist

### **Get ready to protect your dog.**

*Kristen Walbolt*

Fire. Flood. Earthquake. Terrorist attack. All of these can strike without warning and leave little if any time for preparation once they hit. What will happen to your dog if disaster strikes? A little planning now will save headache and heartache at a time when minutes count.

**Before a Disaster** Make sure your dog's ID tags are up to date. Include contact information for a relative or friend outside the area. If there is little time, use an indelible ink pen to mark your dog's collar or a piece of tape attached to the back of the tag. Keep a current picture of your dog on you in case it gets lost.

**Find a safe place to take your pets.** Most disaster shelters can't take pets, so contact your local animal shelter, humane society, veterinarian, or emergency management agency to identify alternatives. Put a list of friends, relatives, pet-friendly motels, and kennels located outside a potential disaster area in your evacuation kit (see next point).

**Make a portable disaster kit.** Include two to three days of pet food, treats, and water in plastic bottles; a can opener; pet medications and medical records in a waterproof package; a basic doggy first aid kit; leashes and (if possible) a pet carrier; current photos of your pet; and the name and telephone number of your veterinarian, as well as your list of potential boarding places. Items should be collected and ready to grab on a moment's notice.

**Identify friends and relatives who can help.** Find people comfortable with your dog who can come to the rescue if you are not home and take care of the animal if needed. Give them a key and instructions on the location of your disaster kit and how to care for your dog.

**Act early.** When given advance warning, act immediately to protect your pet. Keep pets inside where they are easy to round up. There may not be time later. Evacuate early. If you wait for a mandatory evacuation, authorities may force you to leave your pets.

**During a Disaster** Protect yourself and your pet. Find a safe place to take shelter (locations may vary depending on the nature of the emergency). If threatened by flying glass and debris, wrap yourself and your pets in a thick blanket.

**Comfort and control your pet.** Animals react differently during stress. Keep dogs securely leashed. Separate dogs, cats, and other pets. Even well-adjusted animals may bolt, bite, or act irrationally.

**If you evacuate, take your pets with you.** A dog's chance of survival is severely limited if left behind.