

September is Disaster Preparedness Month

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We're recently seen and heard concerns expressed about the West Coast being far overdue for "The Big One" - meaning an earthquake of tremendous proportions - but emergencies come in many forms, and they may require anything from a brief absence from your home to permanent evacuation. Each type of disaster requires different measures to keep your pets safe. The best thing you can do for yourself and your pets is to be prepared.

Following are excerpts from the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) site. For details relating to each step, go to www.aspca.org/pet-care/disaster-preparedness

Step 1: Get a Rescue Alert Sticker

This easy-to-use sticker will let people know that pets are inside your home. To get a free emergency pet alert sticker for your home, [please fill out our online order form](#) (from the ASPCA); please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Your local pet supply store may also sell similar stickers.

Step 2: Arrange a Safe Haven

*Arrange a safe haven for your pets in the event of evacuation. DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND. Remember, if it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pets. They may become trapped or escape and be exposed to numerous life-threatening hazards. **Note that not all Red Cross disaster shelters accept pets**, so it is imperative that you have determined where you will bring your pets ahead of time:*

Step 3: Emergency Supplies and Traveling Kits

Keep an Evac-Pack and supplies handy for your pets. Make sure that everyone in the family knows where it is. This kit should be clearly labeled and easy to carry.

Step 4: Choose "Designated Caregivers"

This step will take considerable time and thought. When choosing a temporary caregiver, consider someone who lives close to your residence. He or she should be someone who is generally home during the day while you are at work or has easy access to your home. A set of keys should be given to this trusted individual. This may work well with neighbors who have pets of their own—you may even swap responsibilities, depending upon who has accessibility.

When selecting a permanent caregiver, you'll need to consider other criteria. This is a person to whom you are entrusting the care of your pet in the event that something should happen to you. When selecting this "foster parent," consider people who have met your pet and have successfully cared for animals in the past. Be sure to discuss your expectations at length with a permanent caregiver, so he or she understands the responsibility of caring for your pet.

Step 5: Evacuation Preparation

If you must evacuate your home in a crisis, plan for the worst-case scenario. If you think you may be gone for only a day, assume that you may not be allowed to return for several weeks. When recommendations for evacuation have been announced, follow the instructions of local and state officials.

Step 6: Geographic and Climatic Considerations

Do you live in an area that is prone to certain natural catastrophes, such as tornadoes, earthquakes or floods? If so, you should plan accordingly.

Step 7: Special Considerations for Birds, Reptiles and Small Animals.

Go to www.aspca.org/pet-care/disaster-preparedness for complete details in all the steps.