



# ALLEY CAT RESCUE

AN ALLIANCE FOR CAT PROTECTION

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## **Pet Disaster Preparedness**

Natural disasters can have far-reaching consequences for local communities and individuals. Having a plan ahead of time can ensure you and your pets survive a disaster. Do NOT leave your pet behind during a disaster; if it is too dangerous for you, it is certainly too dangerous for your pet.

### **Hurricane Katrina and its Effect on Pet Disaster Preparedness**

Hurricane Katrina was a turning point for how the federal government handles companion animals affected by natural disasters. At the time of the hurricane, there were no federal or state laws on including pets in disaster planning. Victims of the hurricane were told they could not bring their beloved animals with them to disaster relief shelters. Many pet guardians refused to leave their pets behind, resulting in potential death. A poll from the Fritz Institute found 44% of people who chose not to evacuate during Hurricane Katrina did so because they did not want to leave their companion animals behind.

Katrina led to the passage of the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act, which authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide rescue, care and shelter to animals affected by natural disasters. This law also directs the Administrator of FEMA to develop disaster relief plans that include pets. Over 30 states have also adopted laws relating to pets in disaster relief planning.

### **Pet Disaster Preparedness Checklist:**

- Have an exit plan. If the conditions in your area become too dangerous, establish a designated meeting place upon evacuation. Make sure the location allows for animals ahead of time (most Red Cross shelters do not accept pets for safety reasons). Possible meeting places could be pet-friendly hotels or a friend/relative's house.
- Bring your animal inside at the first sign of a disaster.
- Secure a rescue alert sticker to all of your outside doors. This will tell rescuers how many animals are in the home who need to be saved. You can contact Alley Cat Rescue for stickers at [acr@saveecat.org](mailto:acr@saveecat.org).
- Research the disasters that most often affect your geographic area to be better prepared for what may come.
- Have a photo of your pet readily available in case they become lost.
- Microchip your pet and keep the contact information up to date.

- Make a safety kit for your animal(s):
  - Leash, harness, or carrier for safe transport
  - Food (at least a two week supply in an airtight container)
  - Bottled water (at least two week supply)
  - Dishes for food and water
  - Animal's medication
  - Litter box and litter (disposable, aluminum cooking pans work great)
  - Copy of medical records in a water-proof container (many pet shelters require proof of current vaccinations)
  - Your pet's favorite toy, blanket, or bed to reduce stress
  - Bandages
- Include your companion animal in any evacuation drills so you both understand the process.
- Keep your pet close by. Not only can your pet get lost but a disaster could cause harmful conditions such as spilled chemicals and downed furniture.

***After the Disaster:***

- Go into the home before your animal and clean up any unsafe conditions.
- If your pet goes outside, check the front and backyard for broken fences and other hazards.
- Be patient. Just as a disaster can be traumatizing for people, they can be traumatizing for pets. Your pet may act anxious or disoriented for a few days after.
- Assess your pet for any signs of physical injuries.
- Consult with a veterinarian if issues persist.

**Colony Caregivers:**

Feral cats are an important consideration when preparing for a disaster. Unlike pets, it may be impossible for you to take your feral cats with you during a disaster. Despite this, you can still take precautions to keep your colony safe.

- Establish relationships with other caregivers so you can have someone to care for the cats in your absence.
- Try to trap kittens before the disaster and find a safe place such as a shelter to hold them, or plan to take them with you.
- Have pictures of all cats in your colony available in case cats are missing after the disaster.
- Put all cat shelters and feeding stations on higher ground.
- Face the doors of shelters downhill so they are less likely to fill with water.
- Consider adding more cat shelters to the area.
- Cover shelters and feeding stations with a tarp.
- Make sure shelters are weighed down with a heavy object or secured to the ground, to prevent blowing away in high winds.
- Make sure the feeding stations and shelters are clear of larger items that could potentially pose as hazardous due to high winds.

- Remember, feral cats live outdoors and are very resourceful. They may leave and seek shelter themselves in the days prior to a disaster.
- If you have to evacuate, leave behind at least a three day supply of food.

***After the Disaster:***

- Do not get worried if you cannot find the cats immediately after a disaster. The cats may be frightened and take their time coming back to the colony.
- Reach out to your local government or organizations if you cannot find your colony cats and find out the procedures for claiming missing cats.
- Remove hazardous materials from the colonies area such as loose branches that may fall.
- Keep a closer eye on your colony for signs of injury.

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