

# SAN FRANCISCO DISASTER PREPAREDNESS COALITION FOR ANIMALS



## PREPARING YOURSELF & YOUR COMPANION ANIMAL FOR A DISASTER

You should prepare your own family first for a disaster; being prepared will help you stay calm and be able to keep all members of the household safe when disaster strikes. Make a disaster plan and discuss it with all household members. Other things to consider:

- Put together a disaster kit that will sustain all members of the family for 3 days. Things in this kit include: food and water for 3 days for each member of the family, a change of clothes for each member of the family, a portable radio with extra batteries, a flashlight, duct tape, Zip-loc bags, trash bags, personal hygiene supplies, a first aid kit and copies of the emergency plan, contact numbers and local emergency locations and phone numbers.
- Have escape routes planned out ahead of time and also a meeting place to gather if you get separated.
- Have a list of contact numbers for friends and family members and also a list of addresses and phone numbers of local hospitals, fire departments, police stations and animal shelters.
- Know where the utility shut-off's are for you home and how to shut off all utilities (gas, electricity, water etc..)
- Have a fire extinguisher on every floor of the home

When Hurricane Katrina hit in August, 2005, 25,000-40,000 animals died because their owners didn't know what to do during a disaster. Several movies ("Dark Waters Rising" and "Mine") and this book, Zeitoun, were inspired by the disaster. Also, due to Hurricane Katrina, the federal law overseeing disasters was modified to include plans for pets and animals. Due to these changes, it is no longer advisable to leave your animals in your dwelling with food and water if you are evacuated. We now encourage all pet owners to bring their animals with them if they are evacuated.

For your pet, preparing for a disaster is very important. Here are some things you should think about:

- Make sure your pet is identified properly. A collar with an ID tag is an easily seen form of identification. All dogs and cats should have collars with identification tags on them. But, collars can come off or be taken off. A **microchip** is a permanent, un-removable form of identification that will last as long as your pet does. It is easily scanned with a

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scanner and all your information, your vet's information and your relatives/friend's information can be linked to it. You can get one implanted in you pet at many veterinarians in the City or there are several microchip clinics in San Francisco every year that offer free microchips to S.F. Residents (See the website for Friends of San Francisco Animal Care and Control (<http://helpacc.org/home>); click on the calendar page for dates and times. The next clinic is on Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>. All clinics are at SF Animal Care and Control 1200 15<sup>th</sup> street.

- Get your pet used to a crate/carrier. Many dogs are already crate trained but most cats are not. Try feeding the pet in the crate, put their favorite toy or treat in the crate and, with cats, try putting catnip in the crate. If you leave the crate out in the home and treat it like a regular piece of furniture, the pet will get used to it.
- Make sure your pet is used to being handled. In an emergency, everyone is nervous and on edge; your pet is no exception. Getting them used to being handled makes it easier to put them in their carrier and transport them if needed.
- Always have a picture of you and your pet, your pets microchip number and your contact numbers with you should you need to evacuate.

Prepare a disaster kit for your pet.

- harnesses/leashes/collars
- their regular food (at least a 7 day supply for each animal), bottled water for 7 days, non-spill bowls, a manual can opener and plastic can lid for canned pet food
- litter boxes, litter and a scoop for cats
- fresh bedding for small mammals
- any medications that are routinely used, a copy of your pet's vaccine history, any special medical records for chronic conditions and a copy of your pet's microchip number
- phone numbers for your emergency contacts, relatives and family
- phone numbers and locations of your vet and the local emergency clinic, the phone numbers and location for SF Animal Care and Control
- plastic bags for feces clean up
- a Pet first aid kit and Pet First Aid book
- recent photos of the pet (especially with you in the picture)
- and any long-term caging you might need (baby gates, X-pens, portable fencing...)

A first aid kit for your pet is as essential as a first aid kit for yourself. A Pet First Aid kit can also decrease the helpless feeling and prepare you for emergencies both minor and major. These are the items you should have in your Pet First Aid Kit:

- Phone numbers of your veterinarian, the emergency clinics in the area and the Animal Poison Control Center (888-426-4435—*there may be a fee for calls to the poison center.*)

- Gauze, both roll type and squares for wounds or muzzling an injured dog.
- Telfa pads, non-stick bandages or absorbent pads to control bleeding and protect wounds.
- Adhesive tape for bandages to secure the gauze or bandage. **Do not use Band-Aids on pets; they can swallow them and get intestinal blockage.**
- Triple antibiotic ointment (Neosporin, etc.) for minor scrapes. Make sure you get the type of ointment *without* any hydrocortisone.
- Activated charcoal or Milk of magnesia to absorb poison. **Call your vet or the poison center before treating an animal for poison.**
- Hydrogen peroxide to induce vomiting. Again, **call your vet or the poison center before treating an animal for poison.**
- Digital Thermometer to check your pet's temperature. This is done **rectally---do not put the thermometer in the pet's mouth!!!** Normal cat and dog temperatures range from 100 – 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Tweezers
- A flashlight and a fresh set of batteries
- Large syringe without a needle or an eye dropper to administer oral medication to the pet.
- A muzzle or soft rope to muzzle a dog. Cats can be wrapped in a towel or small blanket or you can use cat muzzle purchased at a pet store.
- A leash and/or harness that fit you pet. The worst thing that can happen is your dog getting loose while you are trying to get it into the car or getting out of the car.
- A stretcher which can be a board, a door or a strong large blanket to transport a large dog that can't walk.

When their pet is injured or sick, most people are scared and feel a bit helpless because they lack the knowledge of how to help their pet. By learning some simple First Aid procedures, you can assist people in your neighborhood with sick or injured pets after a disaster. Remember, First Aid is not a substitute for proper veterinary care at a Veterinary Hospital.

Safety is always the primary concern. Even the gentlest pet may bite and scratch or become aggressive when in pain or when it is fearful. Never hug an injured animal; by hugging an injured animal, you put your face too close to theirs and you can be bitten or attacked very easily. Putting a blanket or towel over the pet will both keep them contained and put a barrier between you and the teeth or claws. Examine them very slowly and stop if the animal becomes agitated. **Never muzzle an animal that is vomiting.** A muzzle will reduce the chances of you getting bitten; muzzles for dogs can be made out of rope, stockings or long towels. Cats can be wrapped in a towel but make sure that they are not wrapped too tightly and that their head and face are uncovered so they can breathe. When you transport your pet put them in a carrier, crate or box.

When a disaster hits, the first thing that will be done is emergency response and rescue. This will be followed by triaging the people with medical concerns and getting people away from damaged areas. The current shelters will be utilized until they reach capacity. If this happens (which won't be until probably 72 hrs after the disaster if at all), temporary human shelters will be set up. Depending upon demand, there may be auxiliary animal shelters set up near the temporary human shelters.

In case of evacuation, let the disaster workers know that you have animals with you. ***Of course, the best place for your pet to be is with a relative or friend who lives in an un-affected area. This is much less stressful for the pet and for you. Make arrangements now for this possibility.*** Never leave a caged pet alone in an evacuated home; the pet has a better chance if they are free to move around the home. Use your Pet Emergency Kit and bring your pet's food, harness, leash, medications and bedding.

There may be auxiliary animal shelters set up near human shelters during a disaster; if this is the case and you are being moved to a human shelter which has an auxiliary animal shelter in place, you can request that your pet be housed at that shelter. All evacuated animals *that have not been placed with family or friends* will be housed at SFACC (1200 15<sup>th</sup> St at Harrison) until we reach capacity. All evacuated exotic animals and small mammals as well as aggressive dogs and cats that *have not been placed with family or friends* will be housed at SFACC regardless of where the owner is sheltered. Again, **it is less stressful for your pet to be kept with family or friends than at a shelter.**

The DPCA is made up of the San Francisco Animal Care and Control (SFACC), the San Francisco SPCA (SFSPCA), Pets Unlimited (PU), Pets are Wonderful Support (PAWS), Veterinary Street Outreach Services (Vet SOS) and the San Francisco Veterinary Medical Association (SFVMA). Each of these organizations is committed to helping the citizens of San Francisco prepare for a disaster by making sure that their animals are prepared for as well.

The DPCA will be hosting an extension of the SF NERT training that is focused on animals. This training, called DART (Disaster Animal Response Team) will be a 4 session course (Nov 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010, January 15, 2011, March 12, 2011 May 21, 2011) that will cover everything from Pet First Aid to how to assist in setting up an auxiliary animal shelter near a Red Cross human shelter. All sessions are from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Hamm's building (1550 Bryant St). Go to the SF NERT website and look under special events for the flyer. Call 415-554-9417 to sign up for DART (sign up for NERT on the NERT website). In your personal disaster kit, remember to include a set of clothes that you can work in if you are a DART volunteer.