

Protecting Pets in Everyday Emergencies

(Courtesy of the Humane Society of the United States)

The events following the terrorist attacks on America of September 11, 2001 made us all think more about preparing ourselves and our families, including pets, for the unforeseen. Many pets were stranded in homes in lower Manhattan for several hours, even days, before someone could reach them with food, water, and TLC.

Could this happen to your pets? How can you prevent it?

An Everyday Occurrence

- The roads are icy and traffic is a mess. The forecast is for another inch of ice. You decide to stay with a friend near the office or near your school, instead of risking the drive all the way home. *Who will check on your cat and give her supper?*
- You and your spouse are running into the grocery store for a couple of things. When you come out, you see fire trucks rushing toward your neighborhood. A propane truck has overturned on the street near your subdivision and you are not allowed to go home. A police officer tells you that the electricity has been shut off. *How can you make sure your birds stay warm?*
- Your mother-in-law has had a heart attack and you are going to meet your wife at the hospital. It may be a long night. *Who will give your dog his medicine?*

These are everyday occurrences all around the country and could well happen to you at any time. Prepare yourself for these events and if a large disaster should ever hit, you will already be ready and know what to do.

Are You Prepared?

The Humane Society of the United States recommends the following actions to make sure that your pets are taken care of when everyday events like these prevent you from taking care of your pets.

- Find a trusted neighbor and give them a key to your house or barn. Make sure that this person is comfortable and familiar with your pets.
- Make sure the neighbor knows your pets' whereabouts and habits, so they will not have to waste precious time trying to find or catch them.
- Create a simple pet emergency/disaster kit and place it in a prominent place where your neighbor can find it.
- If the emergency involves evacuation, make sure the neighbor would be willing to take your pets and has access to the appropriate carriers and leashes. Plan to meet at a prearranged location.
- If you use a petsitting service, they may be available to help, but discuss the possibility well in advance.

Do You Know of a Pet Who Might Be Stranded?

If you know a friend or neighbor who has pets, and you think this person may be a victim of an accident or a disaster—or if you simply have not seen that person caring for their pets as they normally do—we urge you to take action to make sure that those pets are being cared for. Here's how:

- Find out if someone is already taking care of the pets. Check with other neighbors and friends or a rental manager.

- If you think that pets are not being cared for, notify your local animal control agency or animal shelter. Do not attempt to break into the home.

Create a Community That's Safe for Pets in Emergencies

If you live in an apartment building or townhouse community, help your landlord, property manager, or community association keep track of the resident pets. Collect this information and keep it in a place where police, rescue, and animal control responders have access to it:

- Information about the pet owners and an alternate pet caregiver: name, unit or address, telephone numbers (day, evening, and mobile).
- Information about the pets: name, type, breed, coloring, temperament, and favorite places.
- Information about the pets' food, medications, vaccinations, and veterinary contact information.
- Location of pet emergency kit and other needed equipment (carriers, etc.).
- Signed permission for entry to the residence for the purpose of rescuing pets in an emergency.
- Location of an emergency key for entry to the residence.