

Town of New Canaan

Preparing for a pandemic and other emergencies: PETS

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.

Arrange for 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 Red Cross disaster shelters will not accept pets because of health and safety regulations, so it is imperative that you have determined where you will bring your pets ahead of time:

- Contact your veterinarian for a list of preferred boarding kennels and facilities
- Ask your local animal shelter if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets
- Identify hotels or motels outside of your immediate area that accept pets
- Ask friends and relatives outside your immediate area if they would be willing to take in your pet

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. Items to consider keeping in or near your pack include:

- Pet first-aid kit and guide book (ask your vet what to include)
- 3-7 days' worth of canned (pop-top) or dry food (be sure to rotate every two months)
- Disposable litter trays (aluminum roasting pans are perfect)
- Litter or paper toweling
- Liquid dish soap and disinfectant
- Disposable garbage bags for clean-up
- Pet feeding dishes
- Extra harness and leash (Note: harnesses are recommended for safety and security)
- Photocopies of medical records and a waterproof container with a two-week supply of any medicine your pet requires (Remember, food and medications need to be rotated out of your emergency kit—otherwise they may go bad or become useless.)
- Bottled water, at least 7 days' worth for each person and pet (store in a cool, dry place and replace every two months)
- A traveling bag, crate or sturdy carrier, ideally one for each pet
- Flashlight
- Blanket (for scooping up a fearful pet)
- Recent photos of your pets (in case you are separated and need to make "Lost" posters)
- Especially for cats: Pillowcase or EvackSack, toys, scoopable litter
- Especially for dogs: Long leash and yard stake, toys and chew toys, a week's worth of cage liner.

You should also have an emergency kit for the human members of the family. Items to include:

- batteries
- duct tape
- flashlight
- radio
- multi-tool
- tarp
- rope
- permanent marker
- spray paint
- baby wipes
- protective clothing and footwear
- extra cash
- rescue whistle
- important phone numbers
- extra medication
- copies of medical and insurance information

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.

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. To minimize evacuation time, take these simple steps:

- Store an emergency kit and leashes as close to an exit as possible
- Make sure all pets wear collars and tags with up-to-date identification. Your pet's ID tag should contain his name, telephone number, and any urgent medical needs. Be sure to write your pet's name, your name and contact information on your pet's carrier
- The ASPCA recommends microchipping your pet as a more permanent form of identification. A microchip is implanted in the animal's shoulder area, and can be read by scanner at most animal shelters
- Always bring pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster. Pets can become disoriented and wander away from home during a crisis
- Consider your evacuation route and call ahead to make arrangements for boarding your pet outside of the danger zone at the first sign of disaster