

Disaster Preparedness

No matter where you live, there is always some threat of natural disaster whether it be an earthquake, a flood, a tornado or a hurricane, the potential is there. Even man made disasters such as a fire or a gas leak, can lead to an evacuation of your family. It is very important that in case of emergency your family is prepared, especially your pets. For years there were no provisions made for animals, but now, organizations such as the American Humane Association, the Humane Society of the United States and Red Cross urge families to take their pets with them during an evacuation and offer services to make this possible. In order for an evacuation to be successful for your furry family, please take these helpful hints into consideration:

- Prepare an emergency kit strictly for your pet. Include in the kit for each pet:
 - a week's worth of pet food
 - any toys or blankets that would comfort your pet during a stressful time
 - any medications your pet takes (or sedatives that might help)
 - a photograph of your family and the pet (in case you are separated you have proof of ownership)
 - a copy of your pet's current shot record (you might be forced to board your pet at a facility while caring for your own family)
 - an extra leash and collar/harness (for your dog/cat)
 - food and water containers
 - any special items necessary for the type of pet you own
- Update the emergency kit as needed (new medications, change in food, etc) and place it in an easily accessible location.
- If you do not already have a carrier for your pet, purchase one and make sure your pet can be comfortable in it. If you do not use the carrier on a regular basis, this is an excellent place to store your emergency kit. Many shelters set up to house families and their pets during an emergency will require a carrier to keep your pet safe and contained.
- Always make sure your pet is properly tagged with a county license, a Rabies vaccination tag and identification. It is best if you microchip your pet as a permanent means for identification.
- Maintain a list of out of state friends or relatives that may be able to care for your animal in case of an emergency. Also, keeping a list of boarding facilities out of your area that would accept your pet is important, especially if you have exotic or special needs pets.

There are many other things to consider in preparation for an emergency or a disaster, such as your evacuation route and the ability to transport your entire family and pets to a safe place. Preparation is vital to a successful outcome and it is very important to remember your pets in these situations, because if you don't, who will?

For more information on disaster preparedness or other animal related issues, please call the City of College Park Animal Control at 240-487-3570 or email vcooper@collegeparkmd.gov.