



DISASTER PREPARATION



**Are you and your loved ones prepared for a disaster?
Here are some tips to help.**

PLAN AHEAD

- How will you and your loved ones get out of the area? In your household, plan who is responsible for what in the event of an evacuation.
- Designate meeting spots if your household gets separated. Also designate contact people out of the area and memorize those phone numbers.
- Have pet carriers, crates, leashes, and go bags ready with critical supplies. Plan your hierarchy of grab priorities (*e.g.*, pets, key documents, go bags etc).
- Have electronic copies of your most critical documents. Use a password manager with a master password you will remember to access accounts.
- Put quick-release (aka breakaway) collars on your animals, even if they never go outside. If you have to evacuate without your pet, a collar helps identify pets from afar. Collars that include your phone number are beneficial, and collars that hold an air tag will also help locate your pet.
- Have your pets microchipped, register the chips, and *update the information when needed*. There are numerous sites where you can register your pet's chip, including my24pet.com, homeagain.com, and petlink.net.
- Take pictures of your pets from all angles, documenting any unique markings. Whisker patterns are precious for identifying cats because no two are the same.
- Put signs noting the number of pets in your home at your home's door and window entry points, at eye level, so rescuers can quickly see how many pets to look for.

IF A DISASTER HITS

- Do not wait to evacuate. Gather your pets ASAP, including getting cats in carriers (wrapping cats in blankets helps to get cats in carriers). If you can't find a carrier, pillowcases closed with duct tape or zip ties also work. Be sure carrier doors/pillowcases/leashes are tightly secure.
- In the event of fire or flood (*e.g.*, your home will not be safe), and you have to evacuate without time to find your pets, leave A LOT of food and water out for them. Leaving a door or window open may allow your pets to escape the structure if needed, although leaving a door or window open also carries other risks.
- If there is time, set up protections for your home depending on the impending threat.
- If you have time, grab essentials, including go bags. For clothes, you can grab your hamper: it's full of clothes you wear.



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THE AFTERMATH, IF PETS ARE MISSING

- If your animals were inside your home, and if your home is still standing, get back to your home as soon as you can safely. In a natural disaster, the area will likely be fenced off within hours or days, preventing you from searching for your pets. Going back before authorities have deemed it safe carries its own risks, but just be aware that you may not have access to your home for weeks or months once the fences are up.
- Animals in a disaster zone are often traumatized and will likely act very differently. House pets may act wild, etc. A disaster can also alter the appearance of your animal, especially after wildfires. When looking for your animal, remember that white fur could look grey, long fur could be shortened, whiskers could be singed, etc.
- Recovery of any animals outdoors should only be done under the guidance and leadership of trained and properly equipped animal rescuers. Untrained or insufficiently equipped rescue attempts often fail, making it much, much tougher to rescue those animals. In addition, many steps after rescue are required, including ensuring secure transport, medical care if needed, checking for a chip/logging in lost/found databases, and short/long term fostering while families are located.
- If you need a foster for your animal while you sort out your living situation, arrange the foster through a reputable rescue to ensure important protocols are followed, like a written contract setting forth each party's rights and responsibilities.
- Encourage local authorities, representatives, and rescue groups to IMMEDIATELY prioritize animal rescue and provide concrete data on their actions to locate, save, and reunite animals. Critical for this effort is recognizing that many animals survived, that access to the disaster area is needed to rescue and feed survivors, that existing facilities and people power will be insufficient to meet the rescue needs, and that securing additional facilities and person power must be prioritized.
- Post details about your lost pet as soon as possible. Many rescue groups and agencies use lost.petcolove.org and pawboost.com. Local Facebook groups dedicated to animal rescue will also be invaluable resources after your disaster.
- Don't lose hope in finding your pets. Animals are incredibly resilient. It is common for animals to be reunited with their owners months after a disaster.



The Baxter Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) organization, EIN 39-2347219, committed to supporting animal rescue in both ordinary and extraordinary circumstances. For more information and to support the work of the Baxter Foundation, please go to www.baxter-foundation.org.