

What to Do with Pets in a Disaster

We will explore various possible scenarios and use the example of a dog as the pet, although the process is going to be very similar regardless of the type of pet.

Pet Safety

Shelter in Place

During a disaster it is suggested that you keep your pet inside and protected as much as possible.

Mandatory Evacuations

Most of us, when asked what we plan to do with our pet if we are forced to evacuate will say “my dog goes with me.” During a wildfire, flash flood or tornado pets should almost always be taken along when evacuating.

However, here are some things to consider.

Scenario

You are required to evacuate. You take your pet. On the freeway there is a delay, because of accidents there are wrecked cars, cars out of gas, abandoned vehicles, the road is blocked both in front and behind. The weather is bad. There is cold or heat. After a while you decide to leave your vehicle and walk to the nearest town. You walk a considerable distance and might need to carry your pet part of the way. You arrive at a Red Cross Shelter.

The sign says, “No Pets Allowed”. You can enter but not your pet.

What to do?

You can continue to look for alternative places of shelter where your pet is welcome.

However, anyone hoping to do what you are hoping to do are already ahead of you thereby diminishing your chances of finding an acceptable place.

At the Red Cross Shelter

If you leave your pet outside here are some of the possibilities:

Your pet becomes disoriented and wanders off and later cannot be found.

Your pet becomes the target of larger pets that have also been left outside.

Your pet decides that going for home is the best answer, which could be many miles away.

Safest Environment

If there is not an immediate threat to the pet (i.e., fire, flood, tornado, etc.) leaving the pet at home might be safer for both you and your pet. For example, your pet could be left in the garage, basement or other somewhat confined space with ample food and water.

Family Emergency Plan

When creating your family emergency plan, it is best to include in your plan provisions for the care of your pet. Thinking and planning ahead frees all of us from making a hurried, emotional and maybe not a very well-thought-out decision.

Evacuations - Environment

When we are in our homes, we have considerable control over our environment. In an evacuation we have little control. We have even less control over the environment for our pets.