

YOU AND YOUR PETS.....

PREPARING FOR HURRICANES

BE PREPARED...

“ A major failing of all Floridians has been the apparent inability to learn and retain the important lessons previous hurricanes should have taught us. Andrew’s most obvious lesson was that we were not prepared for this hurricane, neither as individuals nor as a community. This mistake must not reoccur.” Dade County Grand Jury, final report - 12/92

The only way to reduce the devastation of a hurricane is to be prepared. The more you prepare, the better your chances of reducing suffering and risk for yourself, your family, your animals and your community. While 38% of U.S. households have children, 43% have pets. Florida is the third most populous state in the U.S., with over 80% of its population within 10 miles of the coast. There is no geographical point in Florida that is far from saltwater. If you live in Florida, you must plan for hurricanes - and that **planning should include your pets**. Any disaster that threatens humans, threatens animals as well.

When any Atlantic or Gulf of Mexico storm is named, all Floridians should take it seriously, watch it closely, and begin implementation of their pre-written disaster plans.

WHY PET OWNERS MUST PLAN

Public shelters will **not** accept pets. If you wait until the last minute to evacuate, you may have no choice but to go to a public shelter. If such a situation should force you to leave pets behind, please prepare your children and other family members for the fact that their pets may not survive or may be lost before you are able or permitted to return to your home. There is no way to know how long it will be before you are permitted back after the storm.

Frightened animals quickly slip out open doors, broken windows or other damaged areas of your home opened by the storm. Released pets are likely to die from exposure, starvation, predators, contaminated food and water or on the road where they can also endanger others. Even

normally friendly animals of different species should not be allowed together unattended since the stress of the storm may cause distinct behavior changes.

REMEMBER: If you must evacuate... then conditions are not only unsafe for you, but unsafe for other living creatures as well.

DEVELOP YOUR WRITTEN PLAN NOW

A written DISASTER PLAN will help you and your pets survive. Identify your evacuation zone and level to determine if and when you would have to evacuate. Always be prepared for one category higher than the one being forecast because a hurricane often increases in strength just before making landfall. If the storm suddenly upgrades, you will not have time to change your plans as winds will have already reached speeds that will make travel unsafe.

ALL MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS SHOULD EVACUATE - regardless of location. Evacuation information, as well as additional preparedness guidelines may be obtained from the Escambia County Emergency Management Office.

Your goal should be to evacuate to a safe location close to home. Long-distance evacuation is not recommended as highways will be crowded. Friends or relatives in a safe area are your best choice. The comfort of knowing you are safe together, far outweighs any inconvenience.

If they are unable to house both you and your pets, arrange shelter for your pets at a veterinarian or kennel close to your evacuation location so that you will have as much contact with them as possible. You and your pets will fare better if you are together.

If you plan to go to a motel, determine in advance whether pets are welcome and what, if any, special rules are applicable. The Animal Shelter and the Emergency Management Office have lists of those motels that accept pets in an emergency.

IF YOU MUST EVACUATE

LEAVE EARLY. An unnecessary trip is far better than waiting too long to leave safely.

All animals should have secure carriers (or collapsible cages for large dogs) as well as collars, leashes and rabies tags. Carriers should be large enough for the animals to stand comfortably and turn around.

Train your pets to become familiar with their carriers ahead of time. Then the carrier will be a secure and comforting refuge if the animal is required to live in it for days - even weeks- after the storm.

Before hurricane season begins on June 1 every year, make sure all your pets have current immunizations and take these records with you if you must evacuate.

Photograph each of your pets prior to June 1 of each year and include these pictures with your immunization and other medical records.

Your pet survival kit should include ample food (at least one week supply); water/food bowls; medications; specific care instructions; newspapers and plastic trash bags for handling waste; brushes, combs, and other hygiene items; toys and others comfort items; muzzles if necessary. A manual can opener is a necessity. Ask your veterinarian for emergency care recommendations.

If you plan to shelter your pets at a kennel or clinic, call before evacuating to determine if space is available. Allow sufficient time to travel from the kennel to your evacuation location after making certain that your animals are secure.

Throughout the evacuation and the storm, your pets will need reassurance from you. Remain calm, keep as close to their routine as possible, and speak to them in a calm, reassuring voice.

IF YOU CAN STAY AT HOME

It is just as important to adequately plan for your pets even if you don't have to evacuate. Carriers, collars with proper ID and leashes should be maintained for your pets at all times.

Your pets will be most comfortable and secured in a safe area of your home until the storm has passed. If they are not secured during the storm and your house is damaged, your pets may escape and become disoriented, since normal landmarks and scent trails could be obliterated. If your pets become lost, proper ID will ensure their return to you.

Place your pet food and medication in watertight containers in a cool, dry, dark place. Store adequate water for your pets. Your water source may become contaminated. (To purify water, add 2 drops of household bleach per quart of water, mix, seal tightly, let stand for 30 minutes before drinking.)

If you bring plants into the home before a storm, be careful not to allow pets access to them since many ornamental plants are poisonous.

AFTER THE STORM

Walk your pets on a leash until they become re-oriented to their home. CAUTION: Downed power lines and other debris pose real dangers to you and your pets. Do not allow pets to consume food or water which may have become contaminated. Be extremely careful in using candles or oil lamps, particularly around pets. Never leave them unattended.

When you know that you have done everything you can do to protect all members of the family, disaster preparedness will give you tremendous peace of mind.

Be critical of your plan, review and update it with your family regularly.

(ECARC Revised 8/95)

SUMMARY OF KEY CONSIDERATIONS:
MAKE SURE ALL PETS ARE WEARING PROPER IDENTIFICATION. If you get separated, it will be their ticket home.

Get your pets inside and under control as soon as a warning is announced. **DO NOT LEAVE A DOG TIED OUTSIDE IN HURRICANE WEATHER.**

If you evacuate to somewhere other than a public shelter, **TAKE YOUR PET.** (If it is dangerous for you, it is dangerous for your pet.)

If you take your pets with you, remember to take for their care:

- A pet carrier properly sized to hold them.
- Food/water bowls.
- A one-week supply of dry food.
- Water in plastic bottles.
- Pet medication and pet health records.
- Leashes (muzzles, if necessary).
- Newspapers & paper towels for cleanup.

If you MUST leave your pets behind:

- Ensure they have access to a safe room without windows, but with adequate ventilation (for instance, a bathroom or utility room.)
- Leave enough food for at least three days.
- A sufficient supply of water is critical.
- If your area might be flooded, provide access to elevated spaces or counters.
- Do not leave cats and dogs in the same space - even if they have been friends.

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