

Protect Your Pets: Remember to Include Them In Your Evacuation and Disaster Planning

July 26, 2011

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NEW YORK, July 26, 2011— All too often when a disaster strikes pets are left to fend for themselves and end up lost, injured or killed. The best way to avoid this tragic scenario is to have a well thought out disaster plan that includes your pet, so that you know where to go and what to take, according to the Insurance Information Institute (I.I.I.).

“Many public shelters that are set up for disaster victims don’t accept pets so you need to find out in advance which shelters or hotels along your evacuation route will accept pets,” said Jeanne M. Salvatore, senior vice president and consumer spokesperson for the I.I.I. “It is tragic, but people have actually died because they were ordered to evacuate and did not want to leave their pets behind.”

Disasters do happen and advance planning is best way for everyone to survive the catastrophe and get their lives back to normal as soon as possible.

The I.I.I. offers the following tips to protect you, your loved ones and your pets in the event of a disaster:

1. Have a Disaster Plan

- Plan in advance where you will go and how you plan to get there.
- Map out your primary route and a backup route in case roads are blocked or impassable. Make sure you have a map of the area available.
- Put together a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians along the evacuation route and outside your area that might be able to shelter your pets in an emergency. Include emergency phone numbers.
- Talk to your vet, the humane society or the local emergency management agency for information regarding community evacuation plans that include pets.
- Make advance arrangements to have a friend or neighbor pick up your pets in the event you are not at home when a disaster strikes. And, plan where you will meet or how you will reach each other.
- Review the I.I.I.’s five step evacuation plan and consider downloading the I.I.I. podcast on evacuation so you have it for easy reference on your PDA.
- Take the Ten Minute Challenge to seeing how long it would take to get you, your family, your pets and all of your important items out of the house.

2. Make a Grab-and-Go Disaster Kit for Your Pets

- Medication and medical records (including proof of rabies vaccination) in a waterproof container.
- Pet first aid kit
- Leashes, harnesses, crates and carriers for transporting pets
- A muzzle, if your pet requires one
- Food and water for at least three days; a manual can opener
- Cat litter and litter box
- Comfort toys
- Recent photo of you and your pet in case you become separated
- Name and phone number of your veterinarian
- If you have pet insurance, the insurance company contact information and policy number

3. If You Must Evacuate, Take Your Pets

- Be prepared to leave early; do not wait for an official evacuation as you might be ordered to leave your pets behind.
- Keep pets on leashes or in carriers at all times.
- Make sure your pet is wearing up-to-date identification. Include the phone number of a friend or relative outside your area in case your pet gets lost and you cannot be reached. And mark the crate or carrier with similar information.
- Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage or carrier. During warm weather, carry a plant mister to mist the bird's feathers periodically. Do not put water inside the carrier during transport; instead provide a few slices of fresh fruit or vegetables with high water content.
- Review the I.I.I.'s article on pet evacuation which includes more detailed information as well as evacuation tips for reptiles and pocket pets such as hamsters and gerbils.

4. After the Disaster

- Once you return to your home, do not allow your pets to roam loose right away. While you assess the damage, keep dogs on a leash and other animals in their carriers.
- Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your pet may become disoriented. Pets can easily get lost in such situations, so give them some time to get used to their "new" surroundings.
- Be patient. Try to get your pets back into their normal routines as soon as possible, and be on the lookout for stress-related behavioral problems; if these persist, talk to your veterinarian.

KEEP YOUR INSURANCE UP-TO-DATE

Insurance is an important part of disaster planning. In addition to having an evacuation plan, the I.I.I. recommends these three steps:

- First, contact your insurance agent to make sure that you have both the right amount and type of insurance protection. You should have enough insurance to rebuild your home and replace all of your personal belongings. And, ask about both flood and earthquake insurance as these disasters are not covered under standard homeowners or renters insurance policies. Separate coverage is available for both disasters, however. The I.I.I. has a brochure on insurance for your house and personal possessions. More information on flood insurance can be found at www.floodsmart.gov
- Second, make sure you have an up-to-date home inventory. This will help you purchase the right amount of insurance and will make the claims process faster and easier. The I.I.I. has free Web-based home inventory software at KnowYourStuff.org.
- Third, take reasonable steps to make your home disaster-resistant. The I.I.I. has a video outline five key steps for Making Your Home More Hurricane Resistant. For detailed information on how to disaster-proof your home or business, go to the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety.

RELATED LINKS

- ASPCA
- American Kennel Club
- American Veterinary Medical Association
- The American Red Cross
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Humane Society of the United States

VIDEO INFORMATION

- I.I.I. Web Video: Disaster Planning with Pets
- I.I.I. Bites and B-Roll. Raw, broadcast quality footage illustrating the pet evacuation tips; bites with spokespersons from the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Red Cross and the I.I.I., as well as Spanish language bites.
For DVC Pro/Beta hard copies, contact Nancy Caldwell 202-638-3400, nancy@washingtonindependentproductions.com.
To get footage via PATHFIRE (available July 26-August 26, 2011):
DMG Content Provider Panel, select: News, Video News Feeds; VNF Provider A, Select the "Pet Evacuation" tab
To get bites and b-roll for broadcast via ftp download:
<ftp://IIIPetVideo:petevac2011@98.172.153.103> Username: IIIPetVideo (CASE SENSITIVE);
Password: petevac2011 (CASE SENSITIVE)

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Insurance Information Institute, 110 William Street, New York, NY 10038, (212) 346-5500

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