

When it rains cats and dogs...

Preparing your pet for emergencies

When preparing for a disaster, most folks have figured out plans for themselves, their children and some even prepare for their neighbors. What some fail to consider is man's best friend.

An unspoken rule is that if we take on the responsibility of a pet, then they are just that: a responsibility. We are charged with feeding, sheltering and providing medical care, in sickness and in health. In good times and bad. Sounds like marriage vows. The reality is some folks have the attitude that if everything melts down, they can simply abandon their pets, grab the kids and run for the hills.

Here are some suggestions offered by www.petmd.com, www.redcross.org and www.co.lincoln.or.us/emergencymanagement to prepare your pet for a disaster.

- Get your dog "chipped" with current contact information and make sure ID tags are on collars.
- Be sure to have extra pet food on hand, along with enough drinking water for the whole household.
- Keep an extra supply of medications or other special requirements.
- Learn where your pet likes to hide when frightened.
- Make sure you have a pet carrier for transportation, as well as a leash and extra collar.



- Carry a picture of your pet in the event you are separated.
- Consider storing your pet's favorite toy or activity with your emergency kit. When circumstances change and upheaval is the order of the day, having a familiar item nearby is one way to relieve your pet's stress.
- Take animals with you if you need to evacuate. Only as a last resort should animals be

left behind. If you have to leave your animals at home, keep them inside a secure area with at least a 10-day supply of dry food and water. Put signs on windows and doors indicating the number and type of animals inside and your contact information.

- Keep your pets' vaccinations and ID tags up to date.
- Don't leave pets in vehicles, tethered or crated without

Creating a community of support to relieve stress

When disaster occurs, the first responders are overwhelmed. YOYO then becomes a reality: You're On Your Own.

The American Red Cross recommends you create a personal support network made up of several folks who will check in on you, ensure your wellness and give assistance if needed. This network can consist of friends, roommates, family members, relatives, personal attendants, co-workers and neighbors. Ideally, a minimum of three people can be identified at each location where you regularly spend time, for example at work, home or volunteer site.

There are important items to discuss and implement with a personal support network:

1. Make arrangements, prior to an emergency, for your support network to immediately check on you after a disaster and, if needed, offer assistance.

2. Show them where you keep emergency supplies and copies of your relevant emergency documents, evacuation plans and emergency health information card.

3. Agree on and practice methods of contacting each other in the event of an emergency.

4. You and your network should always notify each other when you're going to be out of town and when you will return.

5. The relationship should be mutual. You have a lot to contribute! Learn about each other's needs and how to help each other in an emergency. You can even collaborate on making preparations to be ready for a disaster.

The single most important thing anyone can do to prepare for a disaster is to organize their neighborhood — and it doesn't cost a cent! Contacting your neighbors, especially fellow seniors can build a sense of communi-

ty and camaraderie along with an assurance that no one need to face adversity alone.

When you are prepared, you are less likely to feel helpless and less likely to experience stress related disorders. You will remember what you discussed as a community and apply what you learned from those discussions and drills to help you overcome your situation.

Other things you can do now to help make a disaster less nerve-racking is to pack items in your emergency kits that you use in everyday life.

Pack coloring or activity books, candy, a good book, playing cards and paper and pens, pencils and color pencils. These items may seem frivolous, but they can really make a difference in helping cope in an emergency. They provide relief from stress during the times you have to wait for your life to return to normal.