

Follow these tips to help keep companion animals safe in time of disaster:

Never leave your pet home alone. The safest place for your pet is with you, so if you must evacuate, take your animals along.

Check boarding places. Make sure a boarding facility is not in a flood plain and will be attended throughout a storm. Ask if they have crates for transport and an evacuation plan, and make sure you have an emergency contact number for them.

Ask friends and family for help. If you live in high-risk areas, arrange ahead of time for you and your pet to ride out the storm with friends in safe zones. Alternatively, check with hotels in safe areas to see if they will permit you to stay there with your pet.

Have carriers at the ready. Make sure travel carriers are safe, the right size, and easily available. And make your pet's carrier a fun and safe place throughout the year by adding treats, toys and meals on a routine basis.

Have a medication plan in place. Talk to your veterinarian about medication options if your pet is fearful of thunder or travel.

Prepare a travel kit. Include food, water, bedding, towels, medical supplies, bathing supplies, flea/tick control, and leashes – and have enough of everything to last two weeks.

Provide plenty of ID. Do not assume your owner tag will immediately reunite you with your pet. If your neighborhood is evacuated and phone lines are down, or your pet is lost during travel, it may be months before you are contacted. Include several forms of ID on your pet's collar, including a temporary tag with the phone number of a friend or relative outside your immediate area.

Microchip your pet. Make sure your chip is registered and that the contact information is updated.

Keep current photos. Always have current photos of your pet with you – they can greatly aid in reuniting you with a lost pet.

Report a loss immediately. If you become separated from your pet during a storm or evacuation, report it immediately to area humane societies, law enforcement and animal control agencies.

Volunteer. If you are untouched by a natural disaster, your volunteer time may be invaluable in helping those less fortunate.