

## **Grassroots Emergency Planning Basics Animals in Disaster, Empty Bowl Pet Food Pantry**

Hurricane Katrina, Mississippi River floods, Mount St. Helens, Oakland Quake, 9/11 Terrorist activity, LA fires... The following tips can make a huge difference when emergencies happen which put our animals at risk in the early hours of disaster response!

- 1) **Use multiple IDs.** A combination of a microchip with either a tattoo or collar tag can speed recovery time and success. Reliance on microchip alone means someone who finds your lost dog also needs to find the time to take that dog to someone with the correct reader for that type of chip where a collar with a phone number and rabies tag creates a quick resource to act on. Also chips can be damaged if the animal is injured. Purchase a high visibility collar
- 2) **Pre-prepared Lost Dog Poster** with inserted pictures of unique elements such as breed, color, age, sex...), ready with contact information, and pre-identified places in the community to post signage which can be quickly printed and posted. When all that is left is to add the lost event information, many times the pet will be returned before it can leave your residential area or is taken to animal control.

An 8.5 x11 printed copy can be placed behind a florescent cardboard paper to increase attention and visibility. Use a spray adhesive to glue a clear plastic paper protector to the florescent cardboard and place a few lost pet posters inside for people to take which will also result in weather protection for the poster as well. Free lost pet poster template can be found at:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/results.aspx?qu=Lost+Dog&av=TPL000>

- 3) **Stress Reduction Preparation.** One of the greatest gifts one can give a dog is to prepared them to cope with the unexpected. From accidental injury, to sudden illness, from evacuations to hospitalizations, teaching your dog to be comfortable with the unexpected can contribute dramatically not only to the ability of the caregivers to provide quality care, but also to shorted recovery time. Teaching a dog to become comfortable with a gentle leader also helps them if they are needed to be muzzled for an emergency reason, seeing a crate as a den helps the dog needing to be confined for long periods during evacuations or health recoveries. Teaching your dog to relax when a stranger handles him will speed up an emergency triage assessment or even to get exercised by volunteer emergency responders who care for evacuated animals.
- 4) **Home Emergency Removal/Evacuation Sticker** on front door or window. Emergency workers responding to a home fire, or chemical spill, will know to look for specific animals who could be removed to safety if found. Order a free decal (and pet poison control decal as well here: <http://www.aspc.org/about-us/free-aspc-stuff/free-pet-safety-pack.html>)
- 5) **Transportation emergency decal and wallet card.** Dogs should always be secured during transport. Many are injured or killed when the dog becomes a projectile during a crash, or caught between the lap of the driver and wheel/airbag release. Unsecured dogs also can run away during a crash, or even prevent rescue workers from helping the family injured in the vehicle, by standing guard/"protecting" family members from outsiders. <http://www.barkbuckleup.com/> provides a free kit which includes a sticker which can be placed on the window notifying rescue workers that pets may be stranded at home, with emergency foster caregiver numbers, when family has been taken to the hospital.
- 6) **Emergency foster agreements.** When an owner becomes catastrophically ill, loses their home or job, having an emergency foster plan in place that has been tested can keep the dogs from being taken to animal control for re-adoption or euthanizing if too old, too sick or too challenging

behaviorally to re-home. A two phase arrangement should be considered. Phase 1 for short term care over hours to a week, which might include a pet sitter or kenneling with transportation and access to home, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> extended care fostering when the owner may have been physically incapacitated. A sample written agreement providing for these extended care authorizations provides for clear directions and can be found here:

[http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet\\_care/military\\_personnel\\_making\\_arrangements\\_for\\_your\\_pets/foster\\_care\\_agreement\\_between\\_pet\\_owner\\_and\\_friend.html](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/military_personnel_making_arrangements_for_your_pets/foster_care_agreement_between_pet_owner_and_friend.html)

**Estate Planning.** When an owner dies, their pets are considered property to be taken to animal control for disposition. Quick and easy addition language and decision suggestions to an existing Will are available here:

[http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet\\_care/providing\\_for\\_your\\_pets\\_future\\_without\\_you/d\\_sample\\_language\\_for\\_your\\_will.html](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/providing_for_your_pets_future_without_you/d_sample_language_for_your_will.html)

- 7) **Online documentation.** When the dog's vet is within an affected area, important medical documentation is not available. Copies of this information, including prescription information can be easily uploaded to an online document server such as Google Docs for access from anywhere with internet availability, (now a standard part of disaster and emergency response capabilities). Documents should also include copies of rabies documentation, vaccination records, special needs, and detailed pictures of animals including pictures of the dog with owner(s) and those who are authorized to recover the animal, should the owner be incapacitated from the emergency. Emergency Fosters (including out of the area emergency fosters) should be given password access to this site. Animal control will not release animals except to individuals clearly authorized by the owner.
- 8) **Create In place sheltering, evacuation route staging and long term relocation planning decisions.** You will be less able to care for your animals, if you have not prepared to cope effectively to the unexpected.
  - a. Review and discuss basic decisions about when to stay and go based on the information available at: <http://www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html>
  - b. Review the pet disaster video, decision and resource recommendations for your animals by clicking on the pet Owner tab here: <http://www.ready.gov/america/index.html> If you have special needs there is additional information to assist with making more effective informed choices.
- 9) **All businesses are required by OSHA law to have Emergency Action Plans** (29CFR 1910.38) which are tested yearly. Business entities who have over 10 employees, (including volunteers or temporary employees) are required to have written emergency action plans which includes evacuation planning for the humans. Help your favorite animal organizations expand their plan to include animal disaster response. <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/index.html>
- 10) **Become a Volunteer Disaster Responder** .HR 3858 Amendment of the Robert Stafford Disaster Relief Act and Emergency Assistance Act provides for assistance to household pets by federal law start here: <http://www.emptybowlpetfoodpantry.org/disaster-services.html>

*CJ Anderson, 602-909-7153, involved with emergency/disaster response for 37 years for communities, businesses and individuals including teaching the Humane Society University Animals in Disaster program, incoming President of Az Central Region Citizens Corp, CERT trainer and federally accredited OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health) outreach trainer.*