

Preparations for Your Pets During This Hurricane Season

Take Steps Ahead of Time to Ensure the Safety of Your Animals

Taking your pets along is the most important thing individuals or families can do for their animals during a hurricane evacuation. Pets left behind can be injured, lost or killed during a storm, or in its aftermath. Pet owners should include their animals in their Family Hurricane Planning, before a storm threatens.

“Sometimes the family pet can be overlooked until the final frantic moments before you and your family are about to evacuate,” states Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Director Cristine McCombs. “Take the time now to develop a plan and assemble your pet’s Disaster Kit to ensure your animal’s safety and care if you are asked to evacuate.”

- Only seeing-eye dogs and other service animals are usually allowed inside human public shelters, although SMART (The State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team) may be able to assist with animal sheltering in areas where public shelters exist.
- Make plans ahead of time to take your pet to stay at relatives, friends or a kennel outside the affected area.
- Know the locations of pet-friendly hotels and motels.
- Prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency; include 24-hour phone numbers.
- Ask local animal shelters if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets in a disaster. Animal shelters may be overburdened caring for the animals they already have as well as those displaced by a disaster, so this should be your last resort.
- Prepare an emergency kit for your pets; include collars & leashes, a three-day supply of food, a manual can opener, many bottles of water, bowls, litter boxes, photographs, and a week’s supply of medications that your pet may be taking, including instructions (in case you and your pet are separated).
- Have copies of your pets’ vaccinations, medical records and prescriptions.
- Make sure your pets wear collars with current license and rabies tags, and identification tags that include information on where you will be staying during the emergency.
- Use a pet carrier for each of your pets to make transportation easier.
- Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage or carrier. During warm weather, carry a plant mister to mist the birds’ feathers periodically. Do not put water inside the carrier during transport. Provide a few slices of fresh fruits and vegetables with high water content. Have a photo for identification and leg bands. If the carrier does not have a perch, line it with paper towels and change them frequently. Try to keep the carrier in a quiet area. Do not let the birds out of the cage or carrier.
- Exotic or dangerous pets are generally dealt with on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that they are handled, transported and cared for by trained personnel at appropriate facilities. To insure for the safety of their animals, owners of this type of pet should have advanced planning preparations ready for their pet’s special needs.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about MEMA and Hurricane Preparedness, go to www.mass.gov/mema.