Make an Emergency Plan for Your Pets

How to keep pets safe in natural disasters and everyday emergencies

**Start getting ready now**

**ID your pet**

**Make sure that** [**cats**](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/collars.html?credit=web_id100104631) **and** [**dogs**](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/dogs/tips/collars.html?credit=web_id100104631) **are wearing collars and identification tags** that are up to date. Remember: The average citizen who finds your pet won't be able to scan for a chip, but they will probably be able to read a basic tag! Microchipping is NOT a guarantee!! Assuming that all animals will be scanned for a microchip is a mistake! Georgia has 159 counties and over 60 of those counties have no animal control. When traveling, dogs should at least have a break away collar listing a name and contact phone number. When you travel from the metro Atlanta area to shows in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, and Tennessee, you will travel through cities and counties that do not have microchip scanners, no animal shelters, and no animal control.

**Put your cell phone number on your pet's tag.** It may also be a good idea to include the phone number of a friend or relative outside your immediate area—in case you have had to evacuate.

**Put together your disaster kit**

Use our checklist to assemble an [**emergency kit**](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal_rescue/tips/pet_disaster_preparedness_kit.html?credit=web_id100104631) for yourself and your pet.

* **Food and water for at least five days** for each pet, bowls and a manual can opener if you are packing canned pet food. People need at least one gallon of water per person per day. While your pet may not need that much, keep an extra gallon on hand to use if your pet has been exposed to chemicals or flood waters and needs to be rinsed.
* **Medications and medical records** stored in a waterproof container and a first-aid kit. A pet first-aid book is also a good idea. **MAKE SURE YOU INCLUDE THE MDR1 LIST.**
* **Sturdy leashes, harnesses and carriers** to transport pets safely and to ensure that your pets can't escape. Make sure that your cat or dog is wearing a collar and identification that is up to date and visible at all times. Carriers should be large enough to allow your pet to stand comfortably, turn around and lie down. (Your pet may have to stay in the carrier for hours at a time.) Be sure to have a secure cage with no loose objects inside it to accommodate smaller pets—who may also need blankets or towels for bedding and warmth as well as special items, depending on their species.
* **Current photos of you with your pets and descriptions of your pets** to help others identify them in case you and your pets become separated—and to prove that they are yours once you're reunited.
* **Written information about your pets' feeding schedules, medical conditions and behavior issues along with the name and number of your veterinarian** in case you have to board your pets or place them in foster care.

**Find a safe place to stay ahead of time**

Never assume that you will be allowed to bring your pet to an emergency shelter. **Before a disaster hits, call your local office of emergency management** to see if you will be allowed to evacuate with your pets and verify that there will be shelters in your area that take people and their pets.

**Contact hotels and motels** outside your immediate area to find out if they accept pets. Ask about any restrictions on number, size and species. Inquire if a "no pet" policy would be waived in an emergency. Keep a list of animal-friendly places handy, and call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave your home.

For help identifying pet-friendly lodgings, check out these websites:

* [Bringfido.com](http://www.bringfido.com/lodging/)
* [Dogfriendly.com](http://www.dogfriendly.com/server/travel/guides/us/us.shtml)
* [Doginmysuitcase.com](http://www.doginmysuitcase.com/)
* [Pet-friendly-hotels.net](http://www.pet-friendly-hotels.net/)
* [Pets-allowed-hotels.com](http://www.pets-allowed-hotels.com/)
* [Petswelcome.com](http://www.petswelcome.com/milkbone/map.html)
* [Tripswithpets.com](http://www.tripswithpets.com/)

**Make arrangements with friends or relatives.** Ask people outside your immediate area if they would be able to shelter you and your pets—or just your pets—if necessary. If you have more than one pet, you may need to arrange to house them at separate locations.

**Consider a kennel or veterinarian's office.** Make a list of boarding facilities and veterinary offices that might be able to shelter animals in disaster emergencies (make sure to include their 24-hour telephone numbers).

**Plan for your pet in case you're not home**

In case you're away during a disaster or evacuation order, **make arrangements well in advance for someone you trust to take your pets** and meet you at a specified location. Be sure the person is comfortable with your pets and your pets are familiar with them. Give your emergency caretaker a key to your home and show them where your pets are likely to be (especially if they hide when they're nervous) and where your disaster supplies are kept.

**If you have a pet-sitter, they may be able to help.** Discuss the possibility well in advance.

**If you live alone and are taken to the hospital and need to stay overnight.** Make arrangements in advance for this emergency. This is a good time to also think about who would take your pet(s) in the event that you or a loved one dies and you cannot care for your pet anymore. I am included in quite a few of our Southern Charm family’s wills, and you can contact me if this is your wish.

**If you evacuate, take your pet**

**Rule number one: If it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pets!!** You have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area, and you may not be able—or allowed—to go back for your pets. Pets left behind in a disaster can easily be injured, lost or killed.

**Rule number two: Evacuate early**. Don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order. Some people who have waited to be evacuated by emergency officials have been told to leave their pets behind. The smell of smoke or the sound of high winds or thunder may make your pet more fearful and difficult to load into a crate or carrier. Evacuating before conditions become severe will keep everyone safer and make the process less stressful.

**If you stay home, do it safely**

If your family and pets must wait out a storm or other disaster at home, identify a safe area of your home where you can all stay together.

* **Close off or eliminate unsafe nooks and crannies** where frightened cats may try to hide.
* **Move dangerous items** such as tools or toxic products that have been stored in the area.
* **Bring your pets indoors as soon as local authorities say trouble is on the way**. Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers, and make sure they are wearing identification.
* **If you have a room you can designate as a "safe room," put your emergency supplies in that room in advance**, including your pet's crate and supplies. Have any medications and a supply of pet food and water inside watertight containers, along with your other emergency supplies. If there is an open fireplace, vent, pet door or similar opening in the house, close it off with plastic sheeting and strong tape.
* **Listen to the radio** periodically, and don't come out until you know it's safe.

**After the disaster**

Your home may be a very different place after the emergency is over, and it may be hard for your pets to adjust.

* **Don't allow your pets to roam loose.** Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your pet will probably be disoriented. Pets can easily get lost in such situations.
* **While you assess the damage, keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers inside the house.** If your house is damaged, your pets could escape.
* **Be patient with your pets after a disaster.** Try to get them back into their normal routines as soon as possible. Be ready for behavioral problems caused by the stress of the situation. If these problems persist, or if your pet seems to be having any health problems, talk to your veterinarian.
* **If your community has been flooded, check your home and yard for wild animals who may have sought refuge there.** Wildlife can pose a threat to you and your pet.

**Be ready for everyday emergencies**

**You can't get home to your pet**

There may be times that you can't get home to take care of your pets. Icy roads may trap you at the office overnight, an accident may send you to the hospital—things happen. But you can make sure your pets get the care they need by making arrangements now:

* Find a trusted neighbor, friend or family member and give them a key. Make sure this backup caretaker is comfortable and familiar with your pets (and vice versa).
* Make sure your backup caretaker knows your pets' feeding and medication schedule, whereabouts and habits.
* If you use a pet-sitting service, find out in advance if they will be able to help in case of an emergency.

**Heat wave**

High temperatures can be dangerous. [Learn more](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/pets_safe_heat_wave.html?credit=web_id100104631) about hot weather safety for pets.

The summer months can be uncomfortable—even dangerous—for pets and people. It's difficult enough simply to cope with rising temperatures, let alone thick humidity, but things really get tough in areas that are hit with the double blow of intense heat and storm-caused power outages, sometimes with tragic results.

We can help you keep your pets safe and cool this summer. Follow our tips for helping everyone in your family stay healthy and comfortable when the heat is on (and even if the power isn't).

## Practice basic summer safety

### Never leave your pets in a parked car. Not even for a minute. Not even with the car running and air conditioner on. On a warm day, temperatures inside a vehicle can rise rapidly to dangerous levels. On an 85-degree day, for example, the temperature inside a car with the windows opened slightly can reach 102 degrees within 10 minutes. After 30 minutes, the temperature will reach 120 degrees. Your pet may suffer irreversible organ damage or die.

### Watch the humidity

"It's important to remember that it's not just the ambient temperature but also the humidity that can affect your pet," says Dr. Barry Kellogg, VMD, of the [Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association](http://www.hsvma.org/?credit=web_id100104631). "Animals pant to evaporate moisture from their lungs, which takes heat away from their body. If the humidity is too high, they are unable to cool themselves, and their temperature will skyrocket to dangerous levels—very quickly."

Taking a dog's temperature will quickly tell you if there is a serious problem. Dogs' temperatures should not be allowed to get over 104 degrees. If your dog's temperature does, follow the instructions below for treating heat stroke.

### Limit exercise on hot days

Take care when exercising your pet. Adjust intensity and duration of exercise in accordance with the temperature. On very hot days, limit exercise to early morning or evening hours, and be especially careful with pets with white-colored ears, who are more susceptible to skin cancer, and short-nosed pets, who typically have difficulty breathing. Asphalt gets very hot and can burn your pet's paws, so walk your dog on the grass if possible. Always carry water with you to keep your dog from dehydrating.

### Don't rely on a fan

Pets respond differently to heat than humans do. (Dogs, for instance, sweat primarily through their feet.) And fans don't cool off pets as effectively as they do people.

### Provide ample shade and water

Any time your pet is outside, make sure he or she has protection from heat and sun and plenty of fresh, cold water. In heat waves, add ice to water when possible. Tree shade and tarps are ideal because they don't obstruct air flow. A doghouse does not provide relief from heat—in fact, it makes it worse.

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### Cool your pet inside and out

Whip up a batch of quick and easy [**DIY peanut butter popsicles for dogs**](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/eating/recipes/animal_treats/dog_popsicles.html?credit=web_id100104631)**.** (You can use peanut butter or another favorite food.) And always provide water, whether your pets are inside or out with you.

The thermometer reads 98 degrees Fahrenheit, and your dog sprawls belly-down on the kitchen floor, panting. It's supposed to be like this all week.

While you're sucking down iced coffees, help your pooch beat the summer doldrums. These easy-to-make treats will keep her occupied (and cool!)

**How to make peanut butter popsicles**

**Ingredients**

1 cup peanut butter, preferably unsalted and unsweetened (**Check your peanut butter's label** to make sure it doesn't contain any kind of xylitol, which is toxic to dogs.)

Half a ripe banana, mashed

Water as needed

In a small mixing bowl, combine peanut butter with a little water or half a mashed banana. (The water and banana aren't essential, but they help with freezing consistency.)

Line a cookie sheet with wax paper, or use Kong-style rubber toys that have a cavity you can fill.

Spoon the mixture onto the tray just like you would cookie dough, or stuff it into the toys. Freeze the tray or toys for several hours or overnight. If you need to reuse the tray right away, pop out the cubes and store them in a bag or container in the freezer.

Serve, and turn any hot dog into a happy camper.

**Tips**

* Pet popsicles can be made out of all kinds of things your dog (or cats) eat normally, so experiment to see what your dog likes best.
* The frozen Kong-style toys make a great cool-down treat for when you will be away for a few hours.
* Try treats suspended in water, watered down wet food and favorite frozen veggies.

Keep your pet from overheating indoors or out with a cooling body wrap, vest, or mat (such as the Keep Cool Mat). Soak these products in cool water, and they'll stay cool (but usually dry) for up to three days. If your dog doesn't find baths stressful, see if she enjoys a cooling soak.

## Watch for signs of heatstroke

Extreme temperatures can cause heatstroke. Some signs of heatstroke are heavy panting, glazed eyes, a rapid heartbeat, difficulty breathing, excessive thirst, lethargy, fever, dizziness, lack of coordination, profuse salivation, vomiting, a deep red or purple tongue, seizure, and unconsciousness.

Animals are at particular risk for heat stroke if they are very old, very young, overweight, not conditioned to prolonged exercise, or have heart or respiratory disease. Some breeds of dogs—like boxers, pugs, shih Tzu’s, and other dogs and cats with short muzzles—will have a much harder time breathing in extreme heat.

### How to treat a pet suffering from heatstroke

Move your pet into the shade or an air-conditioned area. Apply ice packs or cold towels to her head, neck, and chest or run cool (not cold) water over her. Let her drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes. Take her directly to a veterinarian.

## Prepare for power outages

Before a summer storm takes out the power in your home, [create a disaster plan to keep your pets safe](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal_rescue/tips/pets-disaster.html?credit=web_id100104631) from heat stroke and other temperature-related trouble.

**The electricity goes out**

If you're forced to leave your home because you've lost electricity, take your pets with you to a pet-friendly hotel. If it's summer, even just an hour or two in the sweltering heat can be dangerous. If you stay at home during a summer power outage, ask your local emergency management office if there are pet-friendly cooling centers in the area.

If it's winter, don't be fooled by your pets' fur coats; it isn't safe to leave them in an unheated house.

**Plans aren't just for pets**

Disaster plans aren't only essential for the safety of pets. If you're responsible for other kinds of animals during natural disasters, disaster plans for [feral or outdoor cats](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/feral_cats/tips/disasters_care_outdoor_cats.html?credit=web_id100104631), [horses](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal_rescue/tips/disaster_preparedness_horse.html?credit=web_id100104631) and [animals on farms](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal_rescue/tips/disaster_preparedness_for_livestock.html?credit=web_id100104631) can be lifesavers.

**FIRE, FIRE!!!!**

# **How to Prevent Your Pet from Starting a Fire**

Picture this: You are not at home. A fire breaks out in your home. Your pets are there all alone. Just the thought of such a story horrifies me. Unfortunately, it is not an uncommon possibility. Recent data from the National Fire Protection Association indicates that 500,000 pets a year are affected by house fires.

Annually, pets are responsible for starting 1,000 house fires. To celebrate Pet Fire Safety Day, I would like to share information from the American Kennel Club and ADT Security Services that might save your pet’s life.

**Prevention is a Priority**

* **Extinguish open flames** — Like moths drawn to light, pets tend to be curious about flames and will be attracted to candles, lanterns, stoves and open fires like the fireplace or BBQ. To avoid problems, make sure all sources of fire are completely extinguished and do not pose a threat.
* **Remove or protect stove knobs** — Pets accidentally turning on stove knobs is the leading reason for pet started house fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Remove or protect stove knobs from activation while you are away.
* **Flameless candles** — Although not as aromatic as regular candles, the light bulbs in flameless candles are unlikely to start a fire if knocked over by your pet.
* **Water bowls on wooden decks** — Like starting a fire with a magnifying glass, the reflection of light through glass bowls can generate enough heat to ignite a wooden deck. Stainless steel or ceramic water dishes cannot focus light in the same way.
* **Inspect and pet proof** — Be alert to loose electrical wires, appliances, and other hazards within your pet’s reach.

**Safety in Case of Fire**

* **Confine young pets** — Puppies are notoriously curious and capable of finding trouble. Confining them to crates or pens while you are away will help reduce the risk of them causing a fire. The confined area should be near an entrance for easy access in case of fire.
* **Keep pets near entrances** — Firefighters can easily find and rescue pets that are near entrances. To ensure quick, safe transport, collars, leashes, and carriers should be near these same entrances. Have emergency kits with your pet’s medical information and a supply of medications that they regularly need close together. Know your pet’s safe hiding places and restrict access to them in your absence so they can’t flee there in fear and make it difficult for firefighters to find them.
* **Monitored alert service** — Battery operated smoke alarms will not only scare your pet but won’t alert anyone to a fire if you are not there. Monitored smoke detectors alert a monitoring system that can then alert both you and the nearest fire station.
* **Pet Alert window clings** — These static clings alert firefighters that pets are inside. Indicating the number of pets on these clings can help save critical time for firefighters. Free window clings are available online from the [ASPCA](http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/disaster-preparedness) or can be purchased at pet supply stores. They should be placed so they are readily seen by firefighters.
* **Plan an escape route** — Plan a safe escape route and have leashes and carriers easily accessible. Practice fire drills so your pet is familiar with the routine in case of fire. Pet friendly work places should also have a designated escape plan for workers and their pets. They also should perform routine fire drills so the plan is familiar to both workers and pets.
* **Outdoor pets** — Housing and pens for outside animals should be located clear of brush, bushes, or other vegetation that could act as fuel for a fire. Outdoor pets should wear or have implanted identification in case they flee your yard or property during a fire.
* **Last but not least** — If you have taken the time to read this ten-page safety information sheet, I would like you to text me “I took the time to read your info”. I would like to send you a gift for loving your puppy enough to read this information!