

Prepare for Disaster – and Include the Cats

Suzanne Stowe, cat lover and Cat Fancy's consumer marketing manager, blogs about disaster readiness for humans and cats.

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Include your cat's needs when preparing a disaster-readiness kit. Last week in the early evening, Southern California experienced a moderate earthquake. It served as a reminder of the importance of preparing for a disaster and to include thinking about your cats when doing your preparation.

Disasters happen everywhere. When I lived in Florida, Hurricane Katrina came ashore in my city of Aventura. Last year in California, I had to evacuate with the cats when wildfires burned within a mile of my home. Since I had done preparation in advance, including putting together an emergency kit for my home and car, the evacuation was much less stressful than it could have been.

I recently had the opportunity to attend a class on Disaster Preparedness and First Aid for Your Pet. Since I am a professional pet sitter, I felt the class would be beneficial. I had attended earthquake disaster preparedness classes before, but never one specifically for pets.

The first steps in preparing for disaster are: Put together an emergency supply kit Develop a plan for your family and pets Be informed about different types of emergencies and the appropriate responses Make sure your pet has appropriate identification

You should also have a pet emergency-supply kit on hand. Items should include leashes, collars, extra ID tags, water, food, medications, health records, first-aid kit, vet contact information with authorization to treat pets and photos of you with your pet to prove ownership. The photo is extremely important since you may have to relocate many miles from your home while your kitties go to a shelter in a different city. Keep the kit in or near the pet's carrier for quick accessibility.

The instructor at the seminar advised keeping pillowcases handy, especially for cats. If you need to evacuate quickly, you can pop a cat into a pillowcase, twist the top closed and escape a fire or other emergency. It was also suggested to keep a pillowcase and blanket or towel in your car. You never know when you will encounter an animal that needs assistance, and these items could prove very helpful.

It is also a good idea to keep a pet first-aid kit in your car.

The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters has an extensive Disaster Preparedness Guide for Pet Owners. Go to their website to download a copy.

I hope you and your kitties never have to use your disaster-preparedness or first-aid kits, but if something does happen, you'll be better able to deal with the situation if you have planned ahead.