

Taking Care of Your Cat in an Emergency

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, discusses how to take action now to avoid confusion in an emergency.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: What can I prepare to take care of my cat in case of an emergency?

A: In the same way you should have an emergency plan for the other members of your family, I suggest you do the same for your feline friends. Put it in writing and post it in a prominent place. In a real emergency such as a fire, you may be too upset to remember the best way to get your cat out safely.

Many years ago when I worked for the Fund for Animals, we had a volunteer in the office who I will describe as a wealthy eccentric New Yorker. One day she received a frightening phone call that there was a fire in her building. She became hysterical because her cat, Sophie, was in the apartment. She was too upset to respond properly, so I volunteered to go to the building and see if I could help (I was much younger and more fearless in those days.)

When I arrived, it was chaos but, with no one paying attention to me, I managed to get inside and bolt up four flights of stairs. There was dense smoke in the hallway but I surprised a fireman, who I told of Sophie's plight. He was marvelous. We got into the apartment, crawled on our hands and knees till we found the poor, frightened kitty. Reunited with her grateful owner, Sophie ended up being just fine but I suffered from the affects of smoke inhalation for days.

This story has a happy ending because someone knew there was a cat in the apartment. I urge all pet owners to put a special decal on their outside doors, letting emergency responders know there are animals inside in case you are not there. These are available from the ASPCA or in pet stores.

Next, know where your cat carrier is at all times — you would be surprised how many people don't. Have a copy of his vaccinations taped to the bottom of the carrier. If you cannot get back into the home right away and need to board him, they will require proof of vaccinations. Above all, stay calm — cats can easily sense when something is wrong and may hide. With a plan in place you are in a good position to safeguard your kitty in an emergency.