

District of Columbia Includes Pets in Disaster Plans

Officials in the District of Columbia signed a plan that formally includes cats, dogs and other pets in disaster plans.

Posted: December 14, 2006, 5 a.m. EST

Cats in the District of Columbia will be included in D.C.'s disaster plans. The District of Columbia joins other states, cities and counties across the country by adopting methods to include pets in disaster plans. The D.C. Department of Health and D.C. Emergency Management Agency signed a plan that includes provisions for people with animals in case of evacuation or relocation needs during an emergency.

"After Hurricane Katrina, many residents would not evacuate because they could not take their pets," said Barbara Childs-Pair, director of the D.C. Emergency Management Agency. "This would not happen in the District of Columbia because we have plans in place that allow residents to shelter people with their pets. We also have a very good relationship between government agencies and humane organizations ... that would assist us with animal protection and care."

The D.C. Department of Health oversees all animal sheltering aspects, including provisions for pet owners and their animals. This department demonstrated its ability to accommodate pets and people when it sheltered Hurricane Katrina evacuees and their animals in the months after that disaster.

The plan's signatures in the District of Columbia come two months after President Bush signed legislation requiring states and local governments to include pets in their disaster plans.