

Disaster Planning for Cats

Advance planning helps keep pets safe in case of an emergency or natural disaster.

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As the height of hurricane season approaches and wildfires threaten the West, thorough disaster planning should include appropriate emergency preparations for pets, said Jack Hanna, animal expert and director emeritus of the Columbus Zoo.

Hanna offers several tips on how to include cats as part of the family disaster plan. If possible, do not leave your cat behind. Most disaster shelters do not accept pets. Contact local animal shelters and veterinarians to obtain information on sheltering pets in case of an emergency and identify pet-friendly hotels on evacuation routes. Speak with neighbors and discuss plans to ensure all pets are taken care of in case some neighbors are not at home. Keep emergency supplies readily available. Each cat needs a sturdy crate, and pet owners should keep a two-week supply of food for each cat. If cats require medication, keep enough on-hand to last for several weeks. Other useful emergency preparedness items include a pet first aid kit, disinfectant, litter and a small litter tray. Be prepared in case of separation. Get up-to-date identification and take a current photo of each cat, showing any distinguishing marks. Keep cats' vaccinations current and records organized. Monitor cats' behavior. Pets may become easily frightened in stressful circumstances resulting in aggressive or defensive behavior. Keep cats in their carriers, watch for changes and give cats extra reassurance and attention.

Hanna provides these tips on behalf of Motel 6, the motel's pet travel spokesman.