

## **General Messaging on Animals in Disasters:**

On October 6, 2006, the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006 (PETS Act) was signed into law (Public Law No: 109-308), amending the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. This Act requires the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure that state, tribal and local emergency plans address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals prior to, during, and following a major disaster or emergency and also authorizes FEMA to study and develop plans that take into account the needs of individuals with pets and service animals prior to, during, and following a major disaster or emergency.

FEMA, through Preparedness Grants, the National Response Framework, Public Assistance Grants and ESF 6 Mass Care activities, has developed guidance that outlines federal assistance and provides federal funds for the efforts undertaken to shelter and evacuate animals.

FEMA recognizes that planning for the evacuation and sheltering of Pets is important to the effective disaster response and recovery for every community, and that it is a human issue that all evacuation and sheltering plans include pets. Lessons learned from past disasters have shown us that people with pets have been less likely to evacuate if they cannot take their pets with them.

## **Messaging Regarding Federal, State, and Local Activity for Animals in Disasters Preparedness**

Pet evacuation and sheltering is a community-wide issue. Animals left behind in disasters can become a risk for emergency responders, and be at risk themselves of health complications, getting lost, injured or killed.

Adding the evacuation and sheltering of pets places into existing plans places great importance on community emergency managers to work with local and national NGOs as well as local, state and federal officials to identify resources and capabilities and assess needs before disasters strike

The evacuation and sheltering of pets can be a costly and complicated process. As with other eligible disaster-related work, state and local emergency managers look to FEMA to outline requirements for disaster assistance grants and aid.

Specifically, FEMA has worked to strengthen state and local planning through the following areas:

- FEMA has been working closely with other federal agencies such as the USDA and DHS Office of the Veterinarian, and nongovernmental partners such as HSUS

- to develop effective policies and practices that strengthen response and recovery actions in disasters.
- FEMA / DHS Preparedness grants have already been utilized in some communities to provide funding for specialized vehicles to evacuate animals in disasters.
  - The recently released National Response Framework outlines the importance for local and individual preparedness plans to include animal evacuation and sheltering. It provides guidance on how response plans at all levels of government should include plans for animal concerns.
  - The NRF places specific mention for the safety and well-being of household pets under the federal direction of ESF 11, coordinated by the USDA. In fact, one of the five primary functions of ESF 11 is :
    - Providing for the safety and well-being of household pets: Supports the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) together with ESF #6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services; ESF #8; ESF #9 – Search and Rescue; and ESF #14 – Long-Term Community Recovery to ensure an integrated response that provides for the safety and well-being of household pets. The ESF #11 effort is coordinated by USDA/APHIS.
  - FEMA’s Public Assistance Grant Program under its Disaster Assistance Directorate recently issued Disaster Assistance Policy 9523.19: Eligible Costs Related to Pet Evacuations and Sheltering on October 24, 2007. This policy strengthens the ability of state and local emergency managers to develop pre-disaster planning and coordinate animal evacuations and sheltering operations during disasters by outlining activities and facilities eligible for reimbursement under Presidential disaster declarations.
  - FEMA is working with our partners in federal, state and local governments, as well as nongovernmental aid organizations, to issue more guidance to state and locals who want to strengthen their response capabilities.

### **Preparedness Messaging for Individuals and Families:**

Animals left behind in disasters can become a risk for emergency responders, and be at risk themselves of health complications, getting lost, injured or killed. That’s why family preparedness plans need to account for the four-legged and winged members of the household. Preparing for pet evacuation and sheltering may seem complex at first, but it is as easy and effective as preparing for any emergency your family may encounter.

Begin by identifying what needs to be in your pet’s evacuation kit: vet records that show immunizations and health conditions; medications; identification and microchip documentation; photographs of you and your pet; water, food and bowls; and comforting items such as blankets and toys, among other items.

Now that you know what to take, you need to know where to go. Not all shelters allow pets. Some do take pets, but they are kept in a separate section. Identify where your

family can go with your pets and how you would get there. It may be a family member's home, a hotel or a congregate shelter identified by the local emergency manager. Either way you will need a transport such as a cage or crate and a leash. Preparing now can mean all the difference in keeping the entire family safe during disasters.

For more information on developing you pet preparedness plan, go to <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/animals.shtm> and to Ready.gov <http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/pets.html> to download the brochure.

You can take the free online training to help yourself and your family and community prepare for disasters. [IS-10 Animals in Disaster, Awareness and Preparedness](#) and [IS-11 Animals in Disaster, Community Planning](#) are available by going to <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/animals.shtm> .

You can also order a copy of the [Animals in Emergencies for Owners](#) DVD for free. This video, developed by the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) /FEMA, is intended to help pet and livestock owners prepare to protect their animals during emergencies. The 2 DVD kit (K-673) is available by going to <http://www.fema.gov/library/index.jsp> and entering “ pets ” in the subject field.