

# Oklahoma City Animal Welfare



## Make a Disaster Plan for Your Pets

### How to keep pets safe during natural disasters

OKC Animal Welfare is the lead agency for animal issues during the time of a disaster. In an effort to keep your pet safe, we encourage you to consider the following;

## Start getting ready now

### ID your pet

Make sure cats and dogs are wearing collars and identification tags that are up to date. You'll increase your chances of being reunited with pets who get lost by having them microchipped; make sure the microchip registration is updated and in your name. But remember: The average citizen who finds your pet won't be able to scan for a chip, but they will probably be able to read a basic tag!

Put your cell phone number on your pet's tag. It may also be a good idea to include the phone number of a friend or relative outside your immediate area—in case you have had to evacuate.

### Put together your disaster kit

**My basic disaster kit includes:**

- Food and water for at least five days for each pet, bowls and a manual can opener if you are packing canned pet food. People need at least one gallon of water per person per day. While your pet may not need that much, keep an extra gallon on hand to use if your pet has been exposed to chemicals or flood waters and needs to be rinsed.

- Medications and medical records stored in a waterproof container and a first-aid kit. A pet first-aid book is also a good idea.
- Cat litter box, litter, litter scoop and garbage bags to collect all your pets' waste.
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses and carriers to transport pets safely and to ensure that your pets can't escape. Carriers should be large enough to allow your pet to stand comfortably, turn around and lie down. (Your pet may have to stay in the carrier for hours at a time.) Be sure to have a secure cage with no loose objects inside it to accommodate smaller pets—who may also need blankets or towels for bedding and warmth as well as special items, depending on their species.
- Current photos of you with your pets and descriptions of your pets to help others identify them in case you and your pets become separated—and to prove that they are yours once you're reunited.
- Written information about your pets' feeding schedules, medical conditions and behavior issues along with the name and number of your veterinarian in case you have to board your pets or place them in foster care.

### Find a safe place to stay ahead of time

Contact hotels and motels outside of your immediate area to find out if they accept pets. Ask about any restrictions on number, size and species. Inquire if a "no pet" policy would be



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[www.okc.gov/animalwelfare](http://www.okc.gov/animalwelfare)  
[awinfo@okc.gov](mailto:awinfo@okc.gov)

Updated April 6, 2016

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waived in an emergency. Keep a list of animal-friendly places handy, and call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave your home.

Make arrangements with friends or relatives. Ask people outside your immediate area if they would be able to shelter you and your pets—or just your pets—if necessary. If you have more than one pet, you may need to arrange to house them at separate locations.

Consider a kennel or veterinarian's office. Make a list of boarding facilities and veterinary offices that might be able to shelter animals in disaster emergencies (make sure to include their 24-hour telephone numbers).

Never assume that you will be allowed to bring your pet to an emergency shelter. Visit The OKC Animal Welfare social media pages to see if a temporary animal shelter has been created or other option is available once a disaster has hit.

### Plan for your pet in case you're not home

In case you're away during a disaster or evacuation order, make arrangements well in advance for someone you trust to take your pets and meet you at a specified location. Be sure the person is comfortable with your pets and your pets are familiar with them. Give your emergency caretaker a key to your home and show them where your pets are likely to be (especially if they hide when they're nervous) and where your disaster supplies are kept.

If you have a pet-sitter, they may be able to help. Discuss the possibility well in advance.

### If you evacuate, take your pet

Rule number one: If it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pets. You have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area, and you may not be able—or allowed—to go back for your pets. Pets left behind in a disaster can easily be injured, lost or killed.

Rule number two: Evacuate early. Don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order. Some people who have waited to be evacuated by emergency officials have been told to leave their pets behind. The smell of smoke or the sound of high winds or thunder may make your pet more fearful and difficult to load into a crate or carrier. Evacuating before conditions become severe will keep everyone safer and make the process less stressful.

### If you stay home, do it safely

If your family and pets must wait out a storm or other disaster at home, identify a safe area of your home where you can all stay together.

- Close off or eliminate unsafe nooks and crannies where frightened cats may try to hide.
- Move dangerous items such as tools or toxic products that have been stored in the area.
- Bring your pets indoors as soon as local authorities say trouble is on the way.



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Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers, and make sure they are wearing identification.

- If you have a room you can designate as a "safe room," put your emergency supplies in that room in advance, including your pet's crate and supplies. Have any medications and a supply of pet food and water inside watertight containers, along with your other emergency supplies. If there is an open fireplace, vent, pet door or similar opening in the house, close it off with plastic sheeting and strong tape.
- Listen to the radio often and don't come out until you know it's safe.

### After the disaster

Your home may be a very different place after the emergency is over, and it may be hard for your pets to adjust.

- Don't allow your pets to roam loose. Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your pet will probably be disoriented. Pets can easily get lost in such situations.
- While you assess the damage, keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers inside the house. If your house is damaged, your pets could escape.
- Be patient with your pets after a disaster. Try to get them back into their

normal routines as soon as possible. Be ready for behavioral problems caused by the stress of the situation. If these problems persist, or if your pet seems to be having any health problems, talk to your veterinarian.

- If your community has been flooded, check your home and yard for wild animals who may have sought refuge there. Wildlife can pose a threat to you and your pet. Be ready for everyday emergencies.
- Check the OKC Animal Welfare shelter and web site daily if you are missing your pet.

### Join the Disaster Brigade

The OKC Animal Welfare Disaster Brigade is a group of trained volunteers who help during the time of a disaster. They help with temporary animal sheltering, field services, education and supply procurement. If you are interested in joining the team, email [awvolunteers@okc.gov](mailto:awvolunteers@okc.gov) to attend a volunteer orientation.



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