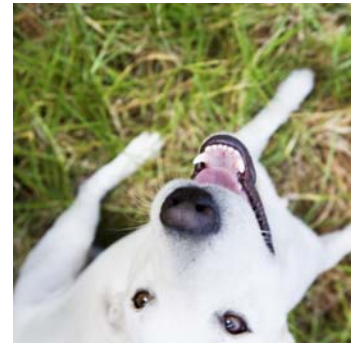




No Pet Left Behind: Modifying Evacuation Plans to Include Pets

It is estimated that Hurricane Katrina left over 600,000 domestic pets dead or without shelter. Not only were animal lives jeopardized, but people were endangered as they refused to leave their pets behind when told to evacuate. Furthermore, rescue teams were endangered as they ventured out into raging storm conditions to save people who had refused to evacuate without their pets. As a consequence, the *Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act* was passed.



What is the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act?

This new federal legislation requires that “State and local emergency preparedness operational plans address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals following a major disaster or emergency.” The act also provides financial support to states and local authorities for animal emergency preparedness purposes. The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act was put into effect on October 6, 2006 as an amendment to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

Why is there a focus on saving pets?

Saving pets will help to save people. Currently, there are more than 356 million pets living in more than 63% of the nation’s households. A majority of pet owners state that they would rather put themselves in danger than leave their pets behind. Without provisions for animals in evacuation plans, many pet owners will endanger themselves to protect their pets. Consequently, evacuation and sheltering plans need to accommodate both people and their pets to ensure orderly and timely evacuation in an emergency.

What does this Act mean for emergency shelter planning?

This act will help to fund “the procurement, construction, leasing or renovating of emergency shelter facilities and materials that will accommodate people with pets and service animals.” It also means that if a state does not comply with this act, it will not be eligible for disaster relief funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

What is an Animal Response Team and what does it do?

The Animal Response Team is made up of animal care and control professionals, emergency services and rescue professionals, and other qualified volunteers. Team members are trained in emergency preparedness and to rescue animals affected by disasters.

What are agencies doing to include pets in their plans?

With this new act in place, local agencies are incorporating plans for domestic pets and service animals into their evacuation and sheltering plans. States are in the process of developing animal response teams and determining how they will address the needs of domestic pets and service animals in the event of a disaster. Experts in animal care and welfare are providing input into the plans.

What can state and local agencies do include pets in their preparedness plans?

- Integrate animal care experts and animal welfare organizations into state and local emergency planning
- Ensure that pet friendly shelters are available and accessible
- Develop Animal Response Teams
- Educate the public about how to put together an emergency plan for their pets and service animals
- Revise transportation policy to allow animals to ride on public transportation during an emergency
- Communicate with state and local governments to ensure that evacuation and shelter of domestic pets and service animals are included in disaster plans

Sources:

1. The DEMHS Advisor – Vol. 2; Issue 11 available at: http://www.ct.gov/demhs/lib/demhs/docsuploaded/demhs_newsletter/demhs_newsletter_nov_06.pdf
2. SART- State Animal Response Teams available at: <http://nc.sartusa.org/>
3. Animal Disaster Plans of U.S. States available at: <http://www.friendsofanimals.org/programs/animal-disaster-plans/>



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