

Alexandria CERT: Community Emergency Response Team

Police – Fire – Medical Emergency	911
Alexandria Non-Emergency	703-746-4444
Alexandria Animal Control	703-746-4774
National Poison Control Center	800-222-1222
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	800-273-8255

September - October
2020

Persons with Special Needs

Small emergencies and large disasters present challenges for adults and children with disabilities or functional and access needs: mobility, hearing, vision, speech, sensory, intellectual, cognitive, or language. This is also true for temporary conditions, such as recovering from surgery or during pregnancy. It is important to plan and prepare.

Stay Informed. Sign up for local alerts through Alexandria eNews. Monitor TV and radio. Have a NOAA weather radio. Download the FEMA app (www.fema.gov/mobile-app) to get National Weather Service advisories, watches, and warnings.

Support Network. A support network can be family, friends, or caregivers. List them and their contact information in a written plan, post the list on your refrigerator, and carry the list in your wallet. Tell them about your supplies for basic needs, including medications and medical devices. Make sure they have a key to your home.

Written Plan. Document vital information and share copies with key people in your support network. Make a longer contact list of names, phone numbers, email addresses, and physical addresses. The list should include your support network, doctors, therapists and other support service providers (e.g., dialysis center), benefits providers, pharmacy, and veterinarian for a service animal. Record your allergies, your medications including the dosages and frequency you take them, your medical devices, and any assistive technologies you need.

Transportation. Plan for accessible transportation for evacuation and for getting to essential medical appointments when road travel may be difficult. Alexandria has an Office of Mobility Services and operates a DOT Paratransit program. If you rely on DASH or Metro, check with them regarding operations during emergency conditions.

Basic Survival Supplies. Prepare portable waterproof bins for both sheltering in place and evacuation. Basic items include 1 gallon of water per person and nonperishable food for 3 to 7 days; cash (in case power is out); flashlight and batteries; cell phone chargers and backup battery; complete change of clothing for several days; personal hygiene items; wipes, garbage bags and ties for sanitation; first aid kit; non-prescription medications such as pain relievers or antacids; pet and service animal supplies; extra eyeglasses or contact lenses.

Also Consider: Wear a medical alert tag or bracelet. Sign up for electronic benefits for Social Security or other payments, in case mail service is disrupted during a disaster.

Special Needs Emergency Plans, Kits

Medical and Assistive Devices. Keep model information in case you need to replace equipment if it is lost or destroyed. Write instructions for operating the device. If your device is battery-powered, have a charged extra battery. Find an alternative location to charge up.

Medications. A 7- day supply of prescription medications and medical supplies such as diabetes testing strips. A cooler and refreezable packs for medications that must be refrigerated.

Mobility. If you use a power wheelchair or scooter, have a lightweight manual chair as a backup. Have an extra seat cushion. If you use a cane or walker, keep an extra one.

Hearing. Have extra hearing aid batteries in your emergency kit. Put pens and extra paper in the kit if you use American Sign Language.

Vision. Mark emergency supplies with large print (for low vision) or Braille labels (for blindness). Keep a Braille or deaf-blind communications device in your emergency kit.

Speech. Plan how you will evacuate with your augmentative communications device, or how to communicate with others if your equipment is not working.

Sensory. Items include headphones to decrease auditory distractions; a small pop-up tent to decrease visual stimulation; hand-held electronic devices for movies and games; comfort snacks; comfort items.

Pets and Disasters

Personal Preparedness First. Prepare for your pet's care in case you become ill or die or you are not home when a disaster occurs. Designate one or two people to care for your pet. Write down instructions for your pet's care and directives for ownership.

Evacuation in Disasters. People with pets are more likely to refuse to evacuate in emergencies. If you have to evacuate, do not leave your pets behind. About 50% of counties have pet emergency shelter plans. Pets will be sheltered in a separate room from humans. Capacity may also be limited, so make alternate plans for sheltering in a hotel or with friends. The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act of 2006 requires states to have plans to evacuate pets and service animals. The American Kennel Club helps local emergency management agencies provide animal care services post-disaster. AKC Pet Disaster Relief trailers are stocked with essential, nonperishable necessities for sheltering pets. AKC Reunite also has a relief fund for local governments. Social media is also used to reunite lost or abandoned pets and their owners.

Psychological Effects on Pets. Disasters and disaster-trauma (exposure to high waters, severe storms, tornados, etc.) can cause a pet to react badly. A pet may experience sensory overload, fear, aggression, separation anxiety, or may refuse to eat. Even human preparations represent a change in routine or have triggers, such as packing for evacuation, or riding in a vehicle for long periods. Rescue activities also create stress, such as exposure to strangers, being near other animals in a shelter, or presence of helicopters or riding in a boat. Before a disaster, work with your pet on desensitizing or counter conditioning: get your pet used to being alone, taking long rides in vehicles, dealing with strangers, or being in a crate; provide treats while doing these. Use enrichment activities and toys to counter stress. For cats, accustom them to wearing a harness and using a cardboard box in a crate.

Stress in Pets. It's important to give your pet time and space to react, if possible. Stress reactions may be physical, behavioral, and/or emotional (just like humans!). Signs of stress are excessive panting or drooling, tail tucking, stiff body posture, cowering posture, freezing, shaking, excessive fatigue, resource guarding, fear and aggression, limited play initiation or engagement, tail chasing, self-biting, excessive grooming, and excessive vocalizations. Understand that your pet's normal behaviors are also reduced. Know your pet's psychology:

- Is my pet comfortable being transported (leash, crate, and vehicle?)
- Can my pet tolerate being separated from me for periods of time (and how long?)
- Does my pet respond well to being handled or picked up?
- Does my pet respond well to being in new environments?
- Does my pet respond well to being around other people?
- Does my pet respond well to being around other animals?
- Do I know how to recognize what stress looks like in my pet?
- Do I know my pet's stressors and triggers?
- Do I know what my pet finds rewarding or soothing?
- Do I regularly work on maintaining desired behaviors?
- Does my pet require any pharmacological interventions for behavioral issues?

Disaster Preparedness for Pets

Information Resources.

FEMA's website is www.ready.gov/pets. CDC's is www.cdc.gov/healthypets/emergencies/index.html.

Prepare and Plan

- Microchip your pets, register the microchip with the manufacturer, and update the information if you move.
- Plan where you will evacuate to. Identify shelters, boarding facilities, pet-friendly hotels, or out-of-town family or friends. Locate a veterinarian nearby, too.
- Practice evacuating your pets.

Build a Kit for Your Pet

- Food and water for at least 3 days; up to a week is better
- Medicines for up to 2 weeks
- Medical records and copies of prescriptions, proof of vaccinations, registration documents
- Collar or harness with ID tag, rabies tag, and a leash
- A picture of you and your pet together to prove ownership (add species, breed, age, sex, color and distinguishing marks)
- Crate or pet carrier large enough for your pet to stand, turn around, and lie down
- Sanitation needs (litter box and litter, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household bleach)
- Familiar items: treats, toys, and bedding can help reduce stress for your pet
- A pet first aid reference book

During and After a Disaster.

If your pet is lost, contact the local animal welfare organization. Don't allow pets to drink or play in contaminated water. Clean and disinfect pet carriers and litter boxes.