

# CAT PROTECTION SOCIETY FACTSHEET

## Disaster Preparedness for Your Cat



Every year people have to evacuate their homes for any number of reasons including bush fires, floods and chemical spills. Many of us have evacuation and emergency plans for our families and our businesses but not for our pets. As our pets are reliant on us for their safety in an emergency, it's essential to have an emergency plan in place.

### Planning Ahead

If you and your family have to leave your home in an emergency you should be prepared to take your cat as well. Even if your cat is used to living outdoors, they may be confused or disorientated as conditions around them change. You may believe that you are only going for a few hours, but if you can't get back to your home, your cat may have to go without food, water and medication for a prolonged period of time.

When making a disaster evacuation plan for your cat, be sure that you have considered the following:

- 🐾 Keep a minimum three-day supply of your pet's food and medication. You will also need: bowls for water and food, a litter tray, litter, bedding, and plastic bags to dispose of cat litter. Make sure you take this when you leave.
- 🐾 Keep a pet carrier for each cat in an easy to access place.
- 🐾 Arrange for a trusted neighbour to take your cat if there is an evacuation when you are not at home. Disasters don't only happen when you are there. If there is a chemical spill or gas leak and your suburb is evacuated you may not be allowed back into your home for some time and your cat may go hungry or without vital medication.
- 🐾 Find a safe place to go ahead of time. Check with family or friends or find out which local hotels and accommodation welcome cats. If you and your family need temporary accommodation you will need somewhere that you can take your cat as well.
- 🐾 If you can't take your cat to a hotel, find out if there are boarding facilities in the local area that hold pets in emergency situations. If your cat does need to be boarded you may need to have her fully vaccinated. You will need to bring your vaccination certificate, her medication and food if she is on a special diet.
- 🐾 Make sure that your pets are wearing ID at all times if possible. Some cats don't like wearing a collar and tag but it's good to have one available for emergency situations. If your cat goes missing you will have a much better chance of getting her back if she is clearly identified.
- 🐾 Have a clear photo of your cat in case he or she goes missing and you need to look for her.

If your family must wait out a storm or emergency in your own home, identify a safe room in your home where both the family and pets can stay

### Don't wait until the last minute

Sometimes an emergency situation comes out of the blue, but in many cases, there is prior warning that you may have to evacuate. Don't leave evacuation to the last minute. A wasted trip is better than leaving too late. If

you do have some advance warning bring your cat inside as soon as possible. If your cat senses that something is wrong she may hide and when the times does come to evacuate she won't be easy to find.

Cats know when it's time to go to the vet and will often run and hide. In an emergency situation cats are likely to exhibit similar behaviour, especially when the cage comes out. You may want to keep your cat in the cage while you are waiting to go or in a small room like a laundry or bathroom, so that when the call to evacuate comes you do not waste precious minutes looking for your cat.

If for some reason you cannot take your cat make sure that plenty of food and water is available until you can return.

### Transporting Your Cat

Keep a pet carrier, one for each of your cats, in a place that is easy to access in an emergency. You don't want to have to carry your terrified cat in your arms while you escape a burning building. When carrying your cat in the pet carrier, make sure you cover it with a sheet to reduce anxiety in your cat. Never let your cat out of the pet carrier until you are enclosed area. Your cat will be very scared and likely to run if she is let out. Make sure your cat is wearing a collar with your mobile phone number at all times when she is outside your home.

### Who Will Look After Your Cat if You Can't?

Have you considered what would happen to you cat if you weren't around any more? Have you made prior arrangements with your family or friends to look after your cat? Don't just assume that they will be happy to do this. Check with them first and make it clear in your Will what your wishes are for your cat.

If family or friends cannot take the cat you may want to make arrangements with a welfare agency such as RSPCA or Animal Welfare League. Both of these agencies have legacy programs in NSW. Under these programs you leave a minimum amount of money in your Will and they undertake to look after the cat. You should make

sure that this is clearly mentioned in your Will and the details checked by a solicitor and confirmed with the welfare agency in question. You can go and visit these facilities in advance to see if you are happy with the arrangements.

