



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Get Ready - National Preparedness Month is Here - For Your Pets, Too!**

This month, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and 3,000 other organizations across the country are encouraging everyone to develop a plan for their family in case of emergency. When you are not in a crisis, it is easy to let an emergency plan slide, but if you have one in place and include your pets, it can help save a lot of heartache. When we hear FEMA, we think natural disasters. But they are not the only crisis for which we should prepare a plan. Fires, car accidents, trauma, and escape are all things we never expect to happen. There are many things you can do to help prepare in the event of an emergency.

One crucial thing you can do is to make sure your pet has identification. Most pets will survive a fire, escaping the house, car, or other emergency, but they may never see their families again without an ID tag or a microchip to reunite them with their owners. This is especially important when you are traveling, moving, or around a holiday. During these times, our pets are out of their regular routine, there may be people visiting, unfamiliar surroundings or loud noises that can all cause frightened pets to escape. Identification saves lives.

Even the best trained dog can behave in uncharacteristic ways in an emergency, so always keep a leash on hand. For your cats and other small animals, keep pillow cases, cat carriers, or even an extra dog leash (that can be made into a makeshift harness) nearby in the event of an emergency. As we head into the winter months, the danger of house fire increases: keep an extra leash and some extra pillowcases in your bedroom so you can quickly and safely transport the pets out of the house in the event of a fire.

In the car, keep your cat confined in a carrier and your dogs in a crate or hooked

up to a doggie seat belt. The consequences of not doing this are serious. If you have an accident, the force of the impact will send your unrestrained pet crashing forward and could seriously injure or kill them. If they are not injured, but a window is open or broken, they could become injured trying to escape the car or bolt from the car and disappear. The distraction from having a dog on your lap or a cat loose and under your feet when your driving is just plain dangerous.

Another plan that should be in place involves what happens with our pets at home if we are injured in an accident. Make sure a close friend or relative is aware of your pets and their medical needs. Keep a card in with your identification in your wallet that lets rescuers know that you have pets at home that need care. Include the number of your pet sitter and veterinarian.

A good thing to have is a first aid kit for your pet. Make sure to take it with you when you travel. It should include a copy of your pet's medical records, photos of your pet and your veterinarian's phone number in a waterproof bag. Additionally, the following should be included: gauze for wounds or to muzzle the animal, pet food & bottled water, any prescriptions your pet needs (rotate them out to keep them current), non-stick bandages, towels, cloth, and adhesive tape. If you plan to travel without your pet, make sure your pet caretaker and your veterinarian are aware of your wishes in the event your pet becomes ill and you can't be reached. This is essential for all pets, not just the elderly ones.

We never know when a crisis will occur with our pets. By having an emergency plan in place, it may save their lives.

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*The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 340 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine.*