



Emergency Fire Preparedness for Pet Owners

The East Coast has its hurricanes, the Midwest has their blizzards....and the West has its fires. It happens every year. There doesn't seem to be any getting around fire season. That's why Summit County Animal Control has modified and reprinted this article originally written by San Diego Animal Support Foundation to help pet owners prepare for the potential fire season. Please print this article, take immediate action, and review it each year.

Be prepared for a FAST exit strategy. During the fire season, people who live in risky areas should make every attempt to make their animals readily accessible in case of an evacuation. This means dogs and cats should be in an area where they can be quickly rounded up for evacuation by you or friends and relatives, if necessary. There is very little time for neighbors and friends to find your outdoor cat during an evacuation.

Pet Emergency Networking. Every pet owner should have a plan for neighbors and friends to be able to gain access to their pets in case of an emergency evacuation. Pet lovers stick together, and will help each other in an emergency! It is a strong possibility that many people will be at work when their residential area is evacuated. This means that they will not be able to gain access to their home or get back into their neighborhood once the area is blocked by emergency crews. Please have a rescue plan set up with neighbors who are either stay-at-home parents, or people who work from home. Keep network phone numbers in your wallet at all times. If you need to call upon your network to go rescue your pets, do not wait for the mandatory evacuation, or they may not be able to get to your neighborhood in time. It's always better to be safe, than sorry. Evacuate your pets as soon as you can, and it will be one less thing to worry about later.

Animal Evacuation Hotline: In the event that your rescue network falls through, you should call the **Summit County Animal Control Evacuation Hotline at 970-668-4143**. This phone line will be activated once an evacuation is ordered. Please be prepared to provide our volunteer call takers with information regarding your address, phone number, animal descriptions and names, location of where animals can be found, and how you would like us to access your home. Your animal evacuation request will be given to an Animal Control Officer or Summit County Animal Response Team volunteer who will make every effort to remove your animal/s from your property and take him to a designated safe area where you can reclaim him.

Pet Emergency Kit/Supplies: Evacuation centers may require a crate for your pet. If you have one, transportation and evacuation will always be easier. If you don't already have one, this will be a good investment, so please consider buying one. Other necessary supplies:

- Leash
- Disposable garbage bags for waste/disposable litter box for cat
- ID Tags
- At least three days worth of food and a can opener, if necessary
- Bowls for water and food
- Treats
- Bottled water
- Medications for your pet, and copy of prescriptions
- Updated photo...in case your pet panics and escapes during evacuation, or at the safe haven
- Blanket or pet bed and a toy if necessary
- Relevant phone numbers, including veterinarian and the Summit County Animal Shelter (970)668-3230

Additional considerations should be made for birds, reptiles and pet rodents.

BRING YOUR PET WITH YOU! Do not leave your pet behind, and expect someone to go into your house to rescue them. Fire Crews, Law Enforcement, and Animal Control employees have very limited resources for rescuing pets. Even if you don't know where you're going to go, BRING YOUR PET, keep your cell phone with you and call Summit County Animal Control, or anyone on your network, who can help you locate a pet-friendly evacuation center, hotel/motel or boarding facility. AS LONG AS YOUR PET IS WITH YOU, HELP CAN BE FOUND!

Safe Haven: If you do not want to stay in an evacuation center, have a plan for a safe haven for you and your pets. If your safe haven can't take pets, then have a plan to get your pets to their own safe haven, be it family, friends, or a boarding facility that is far from the evacuated area. This is a yearly discussion you should have with someone to make sure you and your pets have a place to go. Don't wait until last minute to make these arrangements.

Rescue Alert Sticker: Because there may be an unexpected reason for not being able to get to your pet, or take them with you, post a rescue alert sticker which you can get from your local pet store. Post where readily visible, including number and types of pets, and veterinarian contact information.

Keep Informed: Stay informed on what is happening in the county pertaining to emergencies, road closures, and school closures by subscribing to SCAAlert. This is a free service and allows you to receive important text messages or emails. You can sign up on at www.scalert.org.

One of the things learned from fires around the country is that a person with a cell phone, and a faraway friend on the other end with a computer and Internet connection can find almost anything they need...pet-friendly evacuation centers, hotels, motels, boarding facilities, news, etc.

We emphasize that the time to plan your family's evacuation (including pets) is not when the

flames are visible from your home. The time to plan is NOW. Fire Season comes every year to Colorado, and your evacuation plan, including contact phone numbers and emergency supplies, should be checked and updated each year.

One of the best things about pet owners is the camaraderie they have for one another. "Dog people" will rush to the aid of any dog, "cat people" will do anything to help a cat, and "livestock people" with a trailer know no limits when it comes to rescuing horses and livestock. So network with your neighborhood and get a yearly plan and call list together at the beginning of each fire season. It's not too late to get going on this right now!