RESPONSIBILITIES of ANIMAL OWNERS
‘PETS and SERVICE ANIMALS IN DISASTERS’

(NOTE: This may also be distributed as part of the Region 22 Emergency Management outreach efforts)

Family disaster planning should also include pets (household animals). If you must evacuate your home and you have the time and resources, plan to take your pets with you. Pets most likely cannot survive on their own and if they do, you may not be able to find them once you return. Include these steps in your planning:

A. Locate a safe place for the pets before disaster strikes. Friends or relatives outside the affected area may shelter your animals. If you have more than one pet, they may be more comfortable if kept together, but be prepared to shelter them separately.

B. Prepare a list of friends, boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency; include 24 hour phone numbers.

C. Call hotels and motels in your immediate area and a reasonable distance from the home. Ask whether they accept pets, under what conditions, and whether they are restricted as to the size or number of animals.

D. Call local boarding kennels.

E. You may not be home when an evacuation order or disaster warning is given. Make arrangements with a trusted friend or relative to gather your pets and meet you at a pre-arranged location.

F. Assemble a portable Pet Disaster Supplies Kit and keep it in a sturdy container in an accessible place. Essential supplies will be needed, regardless of the time the family will be away.

1. Medication and medical records (stored in a waterproof container),

2. A first aid kit,

3. Current photos of the pet(s),

4. Food, water, medications, portable bowls, cat litter/pan, and can opener, feeding schedule, notes about medications or potential behavior problems,

5. Instructions on the pet(s)’ feeding schedules, diet, and special circumstances (allergies, difficulty chewing/swallowing, mobility restrictions, diabetes, etc.) and

6. Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and/or carriers to transport pets.
G. Know what to do as a disaster approaches:

1. Owners are responsible for the care, feeding and control of their animals at all times, including any time spent in public or private shelters.

2. Call ahead to your pre-identified care facility to confirm emergency shelter arrangements for you and your pet.

3. Check that your pet disaster supplies are ready to take at short notice.

4. Eliminate search time for your pets by sheltering them in one central place (a barn, the house, the basement, storm cellar, etc.).

5. Make sure all dogs and cats are wearing collars that are securely fastened with up-to-date identifications. If available, attach the name, address, and phone number of the temporary shelter the family will be located or the information of the friend/relative where you'll be staying. Temporary tags may be purchased or adhesive tape attached to the pet’s I.D. tag may be used for additional information.

6. Transport dogs, cats and birds in sturdy carriers, reptiles such as snakes and lizards in heavy cloth bags, "pocket pets" animals such as rabbits, hamsters, gerbils in cages that can contain litter or the bedding without spilling during transport or sheltering.

H. If you cannot move your animals, try to arrange to leave a minimum of three days food and water for each animal. Bring all animals indoors. Do not chain or restrict any animals outside. Separate dogs from cats as even “friendly” or “family pets” may show signs of stress and lash out or attack other animals in the house. Provide for sanitation as best possible.

I. Provide for search and rescue responders semi-permanent notices on the inside and outside of the house that there are animals in the house. List the kinds and numbers of animals, favorite hiding places, other essential information and how the responder can reach you concerning the care and welfare of your pets.

J. Follow all directions and procedures if you place the pet in a public animal care facility. You are still responsible for your animal(s).

K. Large animals and livestock require a higher level of response. Additional planning guidelines may be available through local veterinarians or animal associations and trade organizations. Plan to have an animal identification system, trained handlers, sufficient transportation and alternate sites to feed and house the animals if evacuation is necessary. Have sufficient feed, water, medications and handling equipment for several days should one choose to shelter-in-place. Consider having an alternate power supply for water pumps.