

Service Animal Emergency Preparedness Guidance – for Handlers

It is important that you and your service animal have supplies ready in case of an emergency and an emergency preparedness plan. In a disaster, such as a tropical storm or hurricane, you may be required to evacuate from your home to an emergency shelter. Develop an emergency and evacuation plan for you and your service animal before a disaster occurs, especially if you must evacuate your home. One aspect of your preparedness strategy should be to provide information to the emergency response entities in your county, so that they can better plan to serve those who might need assistance in the event of disaster. Also, sign up to receive disaster and other alerts and warnings text and/or email messages from your local agencies. This can be completed through New Jersey's Register Ready- for more information visit: <http://ready.nj.gov/plan-prepare/access-functional-needs.shtml>

If you have to evacuate your home in a disaster some emergency shelters may have a no pet policy, however they are required by law to allow service animals to accompany their handlers. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures that people with disabilities have access to all available services, including emergency services. Also, public transportation must permit service animals into the vehicle, so a service animal is allowed to be transported with their handler during an evacuation. Please keep in mind you may need to explain to first responders that your service animal needs to stay with you during an evacuation and at an evacuation shelter.

To plan for disasters where you have to shelter-in-place in your home:

- Ensure there is a backup plan for electric if power is lost, particularly for heating or cooling to keep you and your service animal comfortable. This may include a generator or battery powered heating or cooling appliance.
- Ensure you have a 14-day supply of shelf stable food, water, and any necessary medicines at home.

Build a support network of people who may be able to assist you or check on you in a disaster or emergency. Identify helpers including family, friends, neighbors, caregivers and care providers. Meet with your helpers to figure out your needs and how you will communicate with them.

As a service animal handler, you should create a service animal Go Bag, in addition to one for yourself. Use an easy to carry bag or container that can be maintained and easily accessed in the case of an emergency to hold the necessary items. Go through the Go Bag monthly to ensure items are still fresh and in working order. Paper documents and identification information should be stored in a sealed plastic bag.

Your Service Animal Go Bag should include the following items:

- Spare ID tag, Rabies tag, License tag
- Leash Collars
- Food and water bowl
- Pet food (at least 3-day supply, shelf stable)
- Measuring scoop for kibble food
- Can opener (if needed)
- Spoon (if needed)
- Potable water

- Supplements or medications (if needed)
- An extra set of the animal's working gear (vest, harness, backpack, collar, boots)
- Basic animal first aid supplies (Consult with your veterinarian about specific supplies recommended)
 - Vet wrap
 - Gauze
 - Bandage Tape and scissors
 - Latex/Nitrile gloves
 - Pet first aid reference book
- Blanket
- Paper towels and disinfecting wipes
- Poop bags/clean-up bags
- Veterinary records, identification, and information packet: *have one in go bag and on your smart phone*
 - One hard copy of this information packet should be stored in the animal's go bag
 - Digital copies may be stored on a smart phone as a backup source of information
 - The My Pet Vital Information document may be used to compile information into one document: https://animalemergency.nj.gov/documents/My_Pets_Vital_Information.pdf
 - Your veterinarian's contact information and an emergency contact must be included
 - Allergies (food or environmental) or required medications must be listed
 - The name and contact information for the agency which retains ownership of the service animal, if applicable
 - Copy of medical records, including important test/lab results
 - Vaccination record
 - Current photograph of you and your service animal
 - Microchip number and the company with which it is registered
 - Ensure your contact information associated with the microchip is up to date
 - If the service animal was trained by an agency, ensure their contact information is documented and easily accessible
- Written feeding instructions for the animal, specifying special diet if needed
- Written copy of laws of service animal access rights
 - Example: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/production-northeastada-org/local/en/NEADA+Fact+Sheet+-+Service+Animals+for+Disaster+Shelter+Workers.pdf>
 - Example: https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

For more information on emergency preparedness:

State of New Jersey Office of Emergency Management Your Kit / Your Plan:

<http://ready.nj.gov/plan-prepare/your-kit-plan.shtml>

State of New Jersey Office of Emergency Management Pet and Animal Emergency Planning:

<http://ready.nj.gov/plan-prepare/pets.shtml>

FEMA Ready.gov Individual with Disabilities:

<https://www.ready.gov/disability>