

Preparing Your Practice for a Disaster

Disaster preparedness is critical for your practice, and not just during hurricane season. Did you know that fire is the most common emergency experienced in veterinary hospitals? Being prepared for an emergency makes financial sense and saves lives. Can you check off the business disaster plan items below?

Evacuation & Disaster Planning:

- Review Insurance Coverage:**
 - AVMA Liability- Does it cover travel and multiple locations?
 - Business Umbrella- Update your contents coverage every three to five years to cover new equipment purchases, and check to see if special riders are needed for more valuable equipment
 - Business Interruption- What length of time are you and your clinic covered? Are salaried employees covered? Ask how the amount paid will be calculated.
 - Flood Insurance- Buy extra flood coverage if your business is in a flood plain.
 - Signage- Can you quickly replace your sign? Is replacement covered?
 - Professional Disability- Maintain adequate coverage in case you are injured or disabled.
- Prepare an Evacuation File Box:** Place copies of insurance papers, employee contracts, leases, payroll information, financial data, checks and bank information, as well as your state licenses, DEA numbers, etc. in a watertight, fireproof container for safe removal during an evacuation.
- Maintain current employee emergency contact numbers:** These should be updated and copies distributed to all employees as needed. Include laminated copies of all clinic employee address, phone and emergency contact information in your evacuation box.
- Maintain good boarding records:** Make sure all boarding patients have correct emergency contact numbers identified on the boarding check-in sheets. Data should include owner, emergency contact number, secondary in-town contact person, dietary instructions, medication(s) being administered and length of time boarding. During hurricane season, add an out of town contact.
- Back up your computer:** You should back up your main computer prior to evacuation (and daily). Zip Drives and external hard drives offer the quickest and safest form of copying large amounts of data for easy, portable back-up computer files. Have at least two copies for two different people to leave with.
- Secure transportation for animals:** Safe, air-conditioned transport must be identified before the crisis. Rental truck companies should be the first source. Car dealers or truck dealers may also be called for availability.
- Evacuate to a safe location:** *Partner* with a classmate or colleague in advance who can provide shelter for you and your patients outside your danger zone during an evacuation. The State Animal Response Team is an excellent source of contact information for partnering.
- Ready your patients for evacuation:**
 - Make copies of the records of all the animals in the clinic at the time of the disaster/evacuation. Place the copies in a watertight container or bag to be carried with the animal during evacuation.
 - Have a clean transport cage ready for every animal in the hospital.
 - Have a two-week supply of food capable of feeding all the animals you plan to evacuate in a watertight box to make transport and storage easier.
 - Carry emergency drugs and supplies with you in case of problems.

- Secure hospital equipment:** All computers, laboratory equipment, X-ray machines and valuable electrical equipment should be covered or encased in heavy plastic bags, moved to a safe room in your facility, or taken with you.
- Move all valuable paperwork, charts and retail items to a secure location within the facility:** Use watertight, plastic containers to store client files and paperwork. Retail items should be moved off the ground. Fire safes are *not* water tight. Plan to take controlled substances, narcotics, and DEA paperwork with you.
- Secure all windows and glass doors:** Precut plywood is the best form of protection-Preventing potential weather damage will always reap benefits!
- Remove artwork to a secure location:** Even though your artwork may be insured, it may not be adequately covered. Plus, if you do not have to replace these valuables, you will have more contents coverage available to replace your damaged inventory and equipment.
- Have cash on hand:** You may not be able to get to a bank or cash a check during an evacuation or after a disaster. Plan ahead and have cash or cashier's checks available.
- Join SART:** Being involved in the State Animal Response Team prepares you to handle an animal emergency calmly and efficiently.

Prepare an Emergency Phone List:

LSU Small Animal Clinic: 225-578-9600
LSU Large Animal Clinic: 225-578-9500
LSU School of Veterinary Medicine: 225-578-9900

State Veterinarian: _____

Local Veterinary Assn: _____

State Veterinary Assn: _____

Small Business Assn: _____

Insurance Agent/Local number: _____

Insurance Company/Toll free phone number:

Personal Physician: _____

Payroll Specialist: _____

Local Office of Emergency Preparedness:

Financial Institutions (local & toll-free numbers):

FEMA: _____

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