

## How to Evacuate with Pets

*While traveling, contain your pet in a crate or cage so that he can't escape and can be kept safe after you reach your destination. A canine seatbelt can be used in transit for larger dogs. Be very careful when making necessary stops. Attach a leash to your dog before you free him, and never open a vehicle door with a loose pet inside.*

In September 2003, Hurricane Isabelle was bearing down on Virginia's York River. As the storm intensified, it became obvious that it was time to evacuate for our safety and the safety of our pets. Though there had not been a mass evacuation order for the area, our house was situated near water and under massive trees, so we decided that leaving was the safest option.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, decide what warning level (issued by the weather service) or what situations will provoke you into action. Some people feel better leaving at the first storm watch or warning, and others wait a while to see where the storm is going to go. It is always better to err on the side of safety.

The first thing you'll need to do is create a pre-storm plan for evacuation. One of the most important steps in your plan is to have your pets [microchipped](#) well before a storm warning. This will identify your pet in case he's separated from you, which can happen in an evacuation.

Your [evacuation plan](#) should include:

1. A supply of fuel that is rotated monthly or treated with a gas stabilizer. When a storm is approaching, people tend to wait until the last minute to get gas. This creates shortages and long lines. Having enough gas handy saves time and guarantees that it will be available when needed.
2. Keep all important personal information, like credit card numbers, receipts and bills, in a secure locked place in your home. If your area is prone to frequent storms, it might be wise to store these items in a safe deposit box. People often waste time and space in their vehicles trying to gather and save these things. The only items that should travel with you are ones that are needed for survival and safety.
3. Choose a destination. Select friends, relatives or a hotel located out of the danger area. For hotel destinations, make reservations at the first storm watch and make sure that they accept pets. It is impossible to predict when and where a storm will hit, but it is better to have to cancel a reservation and even pay a fee than be left with no place to go.
4. Have maps in the vehicle so that you can navigate detours.
5. Include phone numbers, copies of veterinarian records, identification photos and other identifying information for your pet in a box kept in a safe location for quick access when you need to evacuate.
6. While traveling, contain your pet in a crate or cage so that he can't escape and can be kept safe after you reach your destination. A [canine seatbelt](#) can be used in transit for larger dogs. Be very careful when making necessary stops. Attach a leash to your dog before you free him, and never open a vehicle door with a loose pet inside.
7. Inform a selected person when you evacuate. Give that person updates as you travel and when you arrive.