Emergency Preparedness
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Looking Ahead to Winter

According to NOAA's annual Winter Outlook (Page 4) announced last month, **Fairfax County** falls into the "**equal chance**" category, meaning there is an equal chance for above-, near- or below-normal temperatures and/or precipitation this winter.

As we look ahead to winter weather, start thinking about what you can do now to be ready when "old man winter" arrives.

• Do you regularly keep your home's emergency supply kit current? Is it restocked on a regular basis with essentials such as a flashlight with extra batteries, a battery-powered radio and extra food and water and blankets in case you lose electricity (and heat)?

• How about your car or truck? Do you have a kit – or at least some winter weather gear – in your vehicle, like road flares, booster cables, a shovel and windshield scraper, tire chains, a flashlight or even waterproof matches or a charger for your cellphone?

• Have you signed up for emergency weather alerts from the Community Emergency Alert Network (CEAN)? *www.fairfax county.gov/cean.*

• Have you talked with child care providers and after-school programs about how to handle possible winter weather that may affect your commute home from work in case you're stuck at the office or in traffic due to snow or ice?

These are just a few of the things to think about and some of the simple steps you can take now to make this coming winter safer for you and your family.

You also may want to bookmark Fairfax County's emergency management weather page for the latest weather forecast from the National Weather Service (*www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/ weather.htm*). You also can hear the current forecast by calling 703-652-1210 if you're not near a computer or lose power.

Over the next few weeks the county's emergency information blog will feature winter preparedness tips. Follow along ar *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/ blog* and share the link(s) with friends and family so that we're all ready for a safe winter.

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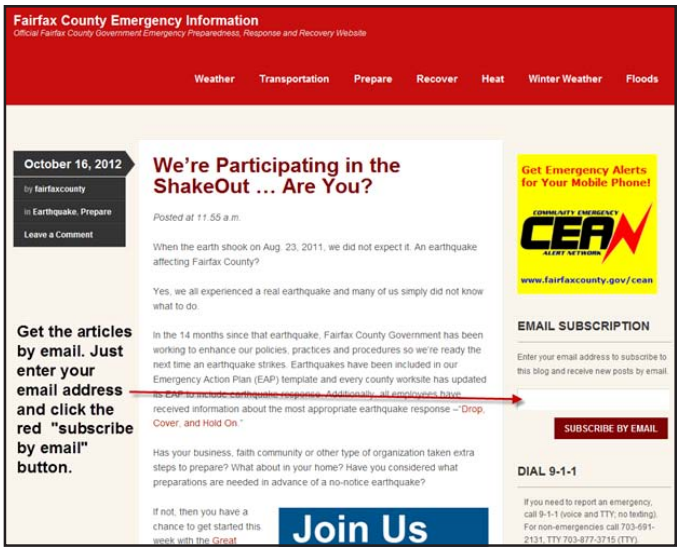
Keep current with news and information from across the National Capital Region. Visit www.CapitalRegionUpdate.gov for news from NCR jurisdictions, traffic, weather and more.



Emergency Blog Articles by Email

Did you know that you can receive every emergency blog article by email? That way you won't miss any emergency news and information.

Just visit the emergency blog at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog, enter your email address in the "email subscription" box at the top right side of the page and click on the red "subscribe by email" button (see screen shot above).

That's all there is to it... and now you'll be "in the know" about emergency preparedness news and information in Fairfax County.

Need a Preparedness Presentation or Speaker?

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management is available to deliver emergency preparedness presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations. If interested, contact Marcelo Ferreira at 571-350-1013, TTY 711, or via email at *marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

Fairfax County, Va., publication.

To request this information in an alternate format, call 571-350-1000, TTY 711.

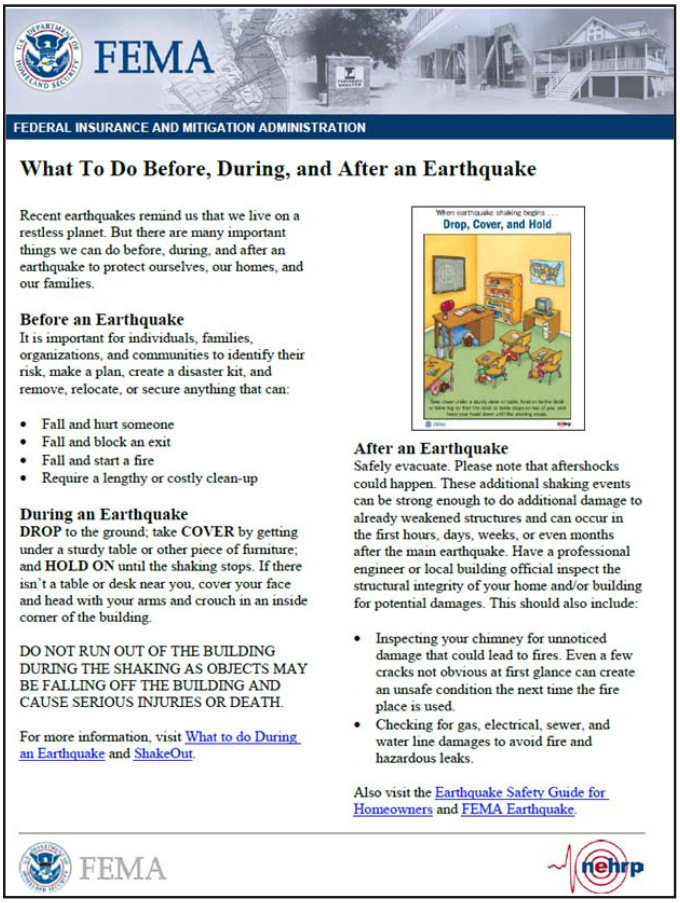
Kitchen Fires No. 1 in New Report

In recognition of Fire Prevention Week (celebrated in October), the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and the U.S. Fire Administration have released new statistics on fires in U.S. homes and urge consumers to install smoke alarms and check to make sure they are working properly.

It is also vitally important to develop and practice a family fire escape plan.

The top cause of fires in the home is cooking equipment, accounting for an estimated 147,400 or 40 percent of residential fires each year between 2008 and 2010. Cooking was also associated with the largest percentage of fire-related injuries, an estimated average 27.4 percent or 3,450, in the home.

Read more online at *www.usfa.fema.gov/media/press/2012releases/100912.shtm*.



FEMA

FEDERAL INSURANCE AND MITIGATION ADMINISTRATION

What To Do Before, During, and After an Earthquake

Recent earthquakes remind us that we live on a restless planet. But there are many important things we can do before, during, and after an earthquake to protect ourselves, our homes, and our families.

Before an Earthquake
It is important for individuals, families, organizations, and communities to identify their risk, make a plan, create a disaster kit, and remove, relocate, or secure anything that can:

- Fall and hurt someone
- Fall and block an exit
- Fall and start a fire
- Require a lengthy or costly clean-up

During an Earthquake
DROP to the ground; take **COVER** by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture; and **HOLD ON** until the shaking stops. If there isn't a table or desk near you, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building.

DO NOT RUN OUT OF THE BUILDING DURING THE SHAKING AS OBJECTS MAY BE FALLING OFF THE BUILDING AND CAUSE SERIOUS INJURIES OR DEATH.

For more information, visit What to do During an Earthquake and ShakeOut.

When earthquake shaking begins . . .
Drop, Cover, and Hold

After an Earthquake
Safely evacuate. Please note that aftershocks could happen. These additional shaking events can be strong enough to do additional damage to already weakened structures and can occur in the first hours, days, weeks, or even months after the main earthquake. Have a professional engineer or local building official inspect the structural integrity of your home and/or building for potential damages. This should also include:

- Inspecting your chimney for unnoticed damage that could lead to fires. Even a few cracks not obvious at first glance can create an unsafe condition the next time the fire place is used.
- Checking for gas, electrical, sewer, and water line damages to avoid fire and hazardous leaks.

Also visit the Earthquake Safety Guide for Homeowners and FEMA Earthquake.

FEMA

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Cybersecurity Disaster

Small businesses in the U.S. are hiding behind the belief they have done enough to secure themselves against hackers and malware when in reality many are vulnerable to attacks that could doom their businesses, according to a recent survey.

The survey, sponsored by the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) and Symantec, found that 77 percent of 1,015 small businesses think they are safe from cyber attacks. The survey defines small business as a company with less than 250 employees.

The reality, however, is that 83 percent of those companies do not have a cybersecurity plan in place even though they are relying more and more on technology such as cloud services and social media to conduct business. (See related article on Page 7.)

More: *www.zdnet.com/on-cybersecurity-small-businesses-flirting-with-disaster-survey-finds-7000005891*.

The county's Emergency Operations Center closed at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 31, after activating on Sunday, Oct. 28 for Hurricane Sandy. During the event, the Office of Emergency Management and county staff evacuated residents on two streets in the Huntington area, monitored weather across the county for other possible evacuations, established a shelter at the Lee District RECenter for residents affected by home flooding or power outages and communicated emergency news through a variety of channels.

Trees caused damage to 60 county homes and numerous intersections were also affected during the storm. However, at this time, no significant damage to county property has been reported.

OEM also activated the EOC for the Nov. 6 election to support the Electoral Board and Police Department.

CapitalRegionUpdates.Gov

News & Info - Around the Region

Marcelo's Minute

What to Do When the Lights Go Out

Marcelo Ferreira

Power outages can cause havoc in the community. Along with infrastructure concerns, such as traffic light outages and disruptions in wastewater pumping stations, lack of electricity will also affect your ability to keep the lights on, stay cool or warm, refrigerate food, charge your phone, get gas, etc.

Recent storms have caused extensive power outages throughout Fairfax County – the derecho in June caused 60 percent power outages in the county; Hurricane Irene caused 16 percent outages in October. Many residents in New York and New Jersey have suffered extensive outages lasting more than two weeks. Taking a few steps prior to an emergency can help ensure your preparedness.

- Develop a support system of friends and family in case of severe cold or heat during a power outage.
- Always keep at least a half tank of gas in your vehicle since power outages will keep the gas station pumps from operating.
- Never use candles due to the risk of fire. Use flashlights and light sticks.
- Never burn anything indoors to stay warm. Extra blankets are an inexpensive solution to staying warm, along with layers of warm clothing.

Ready.gov contains information on preparing for a blackout at *www.ready.gov/blackouts*. Additional information can be viewed at Dominion Virginia Power (*https://www.dom.com/storm-center/storm-and-restoration-faqs.jsp*) and NOVEC at *www.novec.com/Safety/index.cfm*.

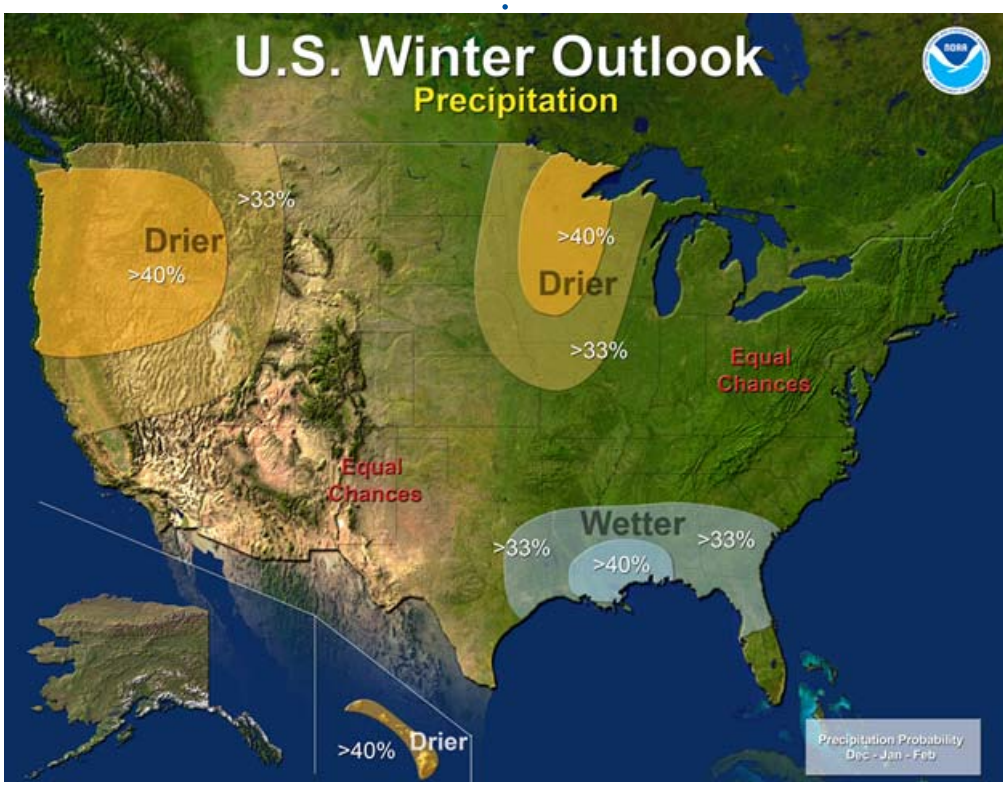
Emergency preparedness initiatives continue year-round. If you or your organization are in need of a presentation about emergency preparedness, call me at 571-350-1013, TTY 711, or email *marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

Marcelo Ferreira, OEM community liaison, holds the certified emergency manager (CEM) credential from the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM).

Elusive El Niño Challenges NOAA's 2012 U.S. Winter Outlook

The western half of the continental U.S. and central and northern Alaska could be in for a warmer-than-average winter, while most of Florida might be colder-than-normal December through February, according to NOAA's annual Winter Outlook announced earlier this month from the agency's new Center for Weather and Climate Prediction in College Park, Md.

Forecasters with NOAA's Climate Prediction Center say a wavering El Niño, expected to have developed by now, makes this year's winter outlook less certain than previous years.



"This is one of the most challenging outlooks we've produced in recent years because El Niño decided not to show up as expected," said Mike Halpert, deputy director of NOAA's Climate Prediction Center. "In fact, it stalled out last month, leaving neutral conditions in place in the tropical Pacific."

In the 2012 U.S. Winter Outlook (December through February) odds favor:

• Warmer-than-average temperatures in much of Texas, northward through the Central and Northern Plains and westward across the Southwest, the Northern Rockies, and eastern Washington, Oregon and California, as well as the northern two-thirds of Alaska.

• Cooler-than-average temperatures in Hawaii and in most of Florida, excluding the Panhandle.

• Drier-than-average conditions in Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, including Idaho, western Montana and portions of Wyoming, Utah and most of Nevada.

• Drier-than-average conditions in the upper Midwest, including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and northern Missouri and eastern parts of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and western Illinois.

• Wetter-than-average conditions across the Gulf Coast states from the northern half of Florida to eastern Texas.

The rest of the country – **including Fairfax County** – falls into the "equal chance" category, meaning these areas have an equal chance for above-, near- or below-normal temperatures and/or precipitation.

This seasonal outlook does not project where and when snowstorms may hit or provide total seasonal snowfall accumulations. Snow forecasts are dependent upon the strength and track of winter storms, which are generally not predictable more than a week in advance.

Learn more: *www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2012/20121018_winteroutlook.html*.

Get Where You Need to Be Before the Weather Gets Bad

Cooler weather has arrived and the first "official" day of winter – Dec. 21 (6:12 a.m.) – will be here before you realize it. Whether you enjoy the snow – and wintery weather – or not, we know that snow can occur before the official start of winter. And many experts are predicting that this year's winter will be a bad one. Whenever winter weather arrives, remember this simple message:

Get Where You Need to Be
Before the Weather Gets Bad

In other words, stay off the roads when it snows!

Overall, most winter storm deaths result from vehicle or other transportation accidents caused by ice and snow. Residents should avoid driving when conditions include sleet, freezing rain or drizzle, snow or dense fog. These are serious conditions that are often underestimated, and they make driving – and even walking outside – very hazardous.

More winter safety tips will be published over the next several weeks on the emergency information blog at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog*. Bookmark this site and visit often – or just subscribe by RSS or email (sign-up box at top right) – to receive updates and stay better prepared for winter this year.

The Fairfax County Citizen Corps harnesses the power of individuals through education, training and volunteer service to make communities safe, stronger and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues and disasters of all kinds. There are five core programs:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps

Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)

Provides support for the police department by incorporating volunteers so that law enforcement professionals have more time for frontline duty. VIPS includes auxiliary police officers, administrative volunteers, and the Citizen's Police Academy.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/vips.htm

Neighborhood Watch

Brings private citizens and law enforcement together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. It brings to life the simple concept of neighbors watching out for neighbors. Volunteers may join an existing group or establish one in their neighborhood.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/nw.htm

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

The Medical Reserve Corps is composed of medical and non-medical volunteers of the Fairfax County Health Department that could support the Health Department if called upon to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural and man-made disasters and emergencies.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/MRC

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Trains people in neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools in basic disaster response skills, such as fire suppression and search and rescue, and helps them take a more active role in emergency preparedness.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/cert.htm

Fire Corps

Volunteers are trained to perform non-operational administrative duties at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Headquarters and at volunteer fire stations.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/firecorps.htm

Sign up for emergency alerts on your phone.
Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean.

Do You Have a Pet Plan in Place? Disaster Survival for Animals Takes Planning

If you are like the thousands of animal owners, your pet is an important member of your household. The likelihood that you and your animals will survive an emergency, such as a fire or flood depends largely on emergency planning done today. Officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) urge you to have a disaster plan for your pets.

Before the Disaster: Have a Safe Place to Take Your Pets

Plan your evacuation strategy and don't forget your pet! Local veterinarians or organizations can be contacted for information on preparing household pets for an emergency.

• Specialized pet shelters, animal control shelters, veterinary clinics and friends and relatives out of harm's way are all potential refuges for your pet during a disaster.

• Prepare a list of facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency; include 24-hour phone numbers.

• Ask local animal shelters if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets in a disaster. Animal shelters may be overburdened caring for the animals they already have, as well as those displaced by a disaster, so this should be your last resort.

• If you have no option but to leave your pet in the house while you are gone, make sure it is in a safe place. Also, leave a sign that specifies how many pets are in the house and what type of pets they are.

• Contact hotels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets and restrictions on number, size and species. Ask if "no pet" policies could be waived in an emergency. Keep a list of pet-friendly places, including phone numbers, with other disaster information and supplies. If you have notice of an impending disaster, call ahead for reservations.

• Prepare a portable disaster supply kit for your pet and keep it in an accessible place. Include food and water for at least three days and a collar with ID tag, harness or leash.

• Your pet should wear a collar with its rabies tag and identification at all times. Include a backup leash, collar and ID tag in your pet's emergency supply kit. In addition, place copies of your pet's registration information, adoption papers, vaccination documents and medical records in a clean plastic bag or waterproof container and also add them to your kit. You should also consider talking with your veterinarian about permanent identification such as microchipping and enrolling your pet in a recovery database.

• A picture of you and your pet together. If you become separated from your pet during an emergency, a picture of you and your pet together will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you in identifying your pet. Include detailed information about species, breed, age, sex, color and distinguishing characteristics.

• Familiar items. Put favorite toys, treats or bedding in your kit. Familiar items can help reduce stress for your pet.

• Medicines.

• First-aid kit. Talk to your veterinarian about what is most appropriate for your pet's emergency medical needs. Most kits should include cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors; antibiotic ointment; flea and tick prevention; latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol and saline solution. Include a pet first-aid reference book.

• Crate or other pet carrier. If you need to evacuate in an emergency situation take your pets and animals with you provided that it is practical to do so. In many cases, your ability to do so will be aided by having a sturdy, safe, comfortable crate or carrier ready to transport your pet. The carrier should be large enough for your pet to stand, turn around and lie down.

Continued on Page 8

ReadyNOVA
Family & Business Preparedness Planners

Fairfax County and Northern Virginia residents can use the family and business emergency planners at *www.ReadyNOVA.org*.

Fall Fire Season

As temperatures dip and the leaves on the trees change color, it's time for the fall wildfire season in Virginia. Officials at the Virginia Department of Forestry remind all residents that the threat of wildfire increases each autumn as leaves dry out and fall from trees, grasses turn brown, humidity levels drop and winds increase.

"Wildfires are directly linked to weather conditions," said John Miller, director of resource protection at VDOF. "Whether it's someone burning debris or trash, an unattended campfire or an intentional case of arson, wildfires have a greater chance of causing bodily harm or property damage in the fall and spring months because the conditions are right for fires to burn hotter and spread faster."

Each year, Virginia experiences more than 1,200 wildfires that burn more than 10,000 acres of land. VDOF employees annually protect hundreds of homes from the ravages of wildfires, but each year there are always some homes that are destroyed by these wildfires.

Because of the increased risk of wildfires, the VDOF joined paid and volunteer fire departments during National Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 7-13, to encourage residents to make sure to have at least two escape routes from homes and neighborhood.

Miller added, "As more than 95 percent of wildfires that occur in Virginia are the result of human activity, taking even the simplest precautions with outdoor fires will significantly reduce the occurrence of wildfires and the threat to you and your neighbors."

To learn more about what you can do to reduce the risk of wildfires, visit www.dof.virginia.gov or www.firewisevirginia.org.

Get Emergency Alerts for Your Mobile Phone!

Get emergency alerts on your mobile phone – or by email – including severe weather alerts. It's free and easy! Sign up at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean*.

Customizable Cybersecurity Plans

Small businesses are more dependent on the Internet than ever before, but 83 percent don't have a formal cybersecurity plan to protect against cyber threats. As larger companies improve cyber defenses, American small businesses are becoming more vulnerable targets.

According to Symantec, small businesses were subject to hundreds of millions of cyber threats in just the first few months of 2012. A typical cyber-attack that infiltrates a small business can cost, on average, close to $200,000 – enough to put many of them out of business.

Last month, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) re-launched the Small Biz Cyber Planner 2.0, (*www.fcc.gov/cyberplanner*) an online resource to help small businesses create customized cybersecurity plans.

Originally launched in October 2011, it is the result of an unprecedented public-private partnership between government experts and private IT and security companies. The planner features new details about cyber insurance to mitigate interruptions to business and financial loss from cyber attacks, best practices on spyware, including how to avoid advanced versions of spyware and what immediate steps to take in case of infection, and recommendations to install new software systems that enable remote cleaning and tracking of laptops and mobile devices in case of theft.

The FCC also released an updated one page Cybersecurity Tip Sheet (*http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-306595A1.pdf*), a quick resource that features new tips on creating a mobile device action plan and on payment and credit card security.

The Small Biz Cyber Planner will be of particular value for businesses that lack the resources to hire a dedicated staff member to protect themselves from cyber threats. The tool will walk users through a series of questions to determine what cybersecurity strategies should be included in the planning guide and generate a customized PDF that will serve as a cybersecurity strategy template.

Have a battery-powered or hand-crank radio available to receive official instructions and updates from local authorities if the power goes out.

Disaster Survival for Pets

continued from Page 6

• Sanitation. Include pet litter and litter box if appropriate, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household chlorine bleach to provide for your pet's sanitation needs.

What to Do As a Disaster Approaches

• Often, warnings are issued hours, even days in advance. At the first hint of disaster, act to protect your pet.
• Call ahead to confirm emergency shelter arrangements for you and your pets.
• Check to be sure your pet disaster supplies are ready to take at a moment's notice.
• Bring all pets into the house so that you won't have to search for them if you have to leave in a hurry.
• Make sure all dogs and cats are wearing collars and securely fastened up-to-date identification. Attach the phone number and address of your temporary shelter, if you know it, or of a friend or relative outside the disaster area. You can buy temporary tags or put adhesive tape on the back of your pet's ID tag, adding information with an indelible pen.

Make an Evacuation Plan

You may not be home when the evacuation order comes. Find out if a trusted neighbor would be willing to take your pets and meet you at a prearranged location. This person should be comfortable with your pets, know where your animals are likely to be, know where your pet disaster supplies kit is kept and have a key to your home. If you use a pet-sitting service, they may be available to help, but discuss the possibility in advance.

Planning and preparation will enable you to evacuate with your pets quickly and safely. But bear in mind that animals react differently under stress. Outside your home and in the car, keep dogs securely leashed. Transport cats in carriers. Don't leave animals unattended anywhere they can run off. The most trustworthy pets may panic, hide, try to escape or even bite or scratch. And, when you return home, give your pets time to settle back into their routines. Consult your veterinarian if any behavior problems persist.

It's never too early to create a disaster plan for you and your entire family. Information on this and other advice on disaster preparedness for animals is available at *www.fema.gov* or *www.ready.gov*.

Virginia Task Force 1 (VATF-1) is part of the federal government's disaster response system, both nationally and internationally. VATF-1 is governed through federal partnerships with the United States Agency for International Development for international response and the Federal Emergency Management Agency for domestic disasters. VATF-1 is one of two internationally certified teams in the country. The team is also deployable within the commonwealth of Virginia and may be used for local events and disasters.

Watch the video (screen shot above) about the team's new disaster training center at *www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDsV3yGqcWI*. For more on the grand opening ceremony visit *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/news/2012archive/2012_75.htm*.

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department offers these fire safety tips:
• Have your chimney inspected annually and cleaned as necessary.
• Never leave a fireplace fire unattended.
• Make sure the fire is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house.
• Allow ashes to cool before disposing of in a metal container (sometimes it takes four days for ashes to cool down).
• Call 9-1-1 immediately when a fire occurs. Residents should not attempt to extinguish the fire themselves.

For more, visit *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr*.

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