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GOOD STORY

Hurricane Sandy: Fast Thinking Officials Rally Community Resources to Reunite Pets with Owners

The LLIS.gov team identified several innovative Whole Community ideas and practices to support preparedness, response, and recovery following Hurricane Sandy.

SUMMARY

New Jersey Governor's Office of Emergency Management (NJ OEM) officials in partnership with representatives from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) successfully coordinated pet search and recovery efforts following Hurricane Sandy.

DESCRIPTION

Hurricane Sandy

On Monday, October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall near Atlantic City, New Jersey, pushing a massive storm surge to shore and generating winds to up to 75 miles per hour. The National Hurricane Center downgraded Sandy to a post-tropical cyclone shortly after landfall. Sandy caused storm surge, record flooding, and wind damage. Nine days after the storm, a large nor'easter caused massive snowfall undermining response operations in the disaster-impacted areas.



As a result of these events, millions of people were left without power and hundreds were displaced along the East Coast from North Carolina to Maine. New York and New Jersey, two of the most populated states in the nation, were particularly impacted by the storm.

Pet Search and Recovery Effort

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, anxious pet owners placed themselves in harm's way as they attempted to reunite with pets left behind in areas ravaged by the storm. Fast thinking NJ OEM officials rallied with USDA, NJDA, and HSUS representatives to establish an emergency hotline and coordinate pet search and recovery efforts. During the response, this hotline received more than 1,300 calls from people forced to leave their pets behind.

Resources related to Hurricane Sandy can be found on the new LLIS.gov [Current Events – Hurricane Sandy](#) page. The LLIS.gov team developed this page to assist responders and officials during Hurricane Sandy response and recovery operations.

Tapping into well-established telecommunication systems and community resources, the team coordinated with and engaged local responders, volunteers, local chapters of the HSUS, the New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), and New Jersey animal control officials to communicate with pet owners, search for, recover, care for, and reunite abandoned pets with their owners. As a result of the quick, innovative and collaborative efforts of government officials, non-profits, first responders and volunteers, displaced residents were kept out of danger while their pets were safely recovered, housed, fed and reunited with their owners.



Dog Rescue in Little Ferry, New Jersey

As of December 4, 2012, volunteers and staff rescued approximately 250 animals and reunited more than 400 pets with their owners. These pets included a variety of birds, fish, iguanas, hamsters, dogs, and hundreds of cats.

In addition, HSUS established the [Foster A Sandy Pet](#) program in partnership with St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center and the Animal Welfare Federation of New Jersey. This program helped pet owners whose homes were devastated by the storm connect with more than 800 people willing to foster animals in need. The program also offered support services such as one-on-one pet behavior counseling and discounted veterinary services.

REFERENCES

The Humane Society of the United States. *Hurricane Sandy Relief*. (Website accessed on 16 December 2012).

http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal_rescue/hurricane-sandy/#id=album-171&num=content-3172

Pet Retention Task Force. *Foster A Sandy Pet*. (Website accessed on 16 December 2012).

<http://fosterasandypet.ning.com/>

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