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LESSON LEARNED

Mass Evacuation: Providing Muzzles and Pet Carriers at Evacuation Hubs

SUMMARY

State and local jurisdictions should collaborate with private sector or pet advocacy organizations to provide muzzles and pet carriers at evacuation hubs. This can help facilitate the swift and safe evacuation of residents and their pets.

DESCRIPTION

On August 16, 2007, Tropical Storm Dean became a hurricane as it moved through the Caribbean Ocean. National Hurricane Center forecasts indicated that Hurricane Dean could make landfall along the southern Gulf coast of Texas. President George W. Bush issued an emergency declaration for 32 Texas counties to provide federal assistance to state and local preparations for Hurricane Dean. This constituted the greatest mobilization of emergency resources in the history of the state of Texas. The direct threat to Texas lessened as Hurricane Dean approached land, although rains and storm surge had the potential to cause coastal flooding. Hurricane Dean made landfall in Mexico on August 21 as a Category 5 hurricane and dissipated several days later without impacting Texas.

As Hurricane Dean strengthened, localities in the Rio Grande Valley prepared to conduct evacuations. Emergency managers recognized that some people would only evacuate if they were allowed to bring their pets. However, despite public education campaigns, most owners were unlikely to have the muzzles or carriers necessary to evacuate their pets safely on public transportation. Emergency managers attempted to secure additional pet supplies, but the local pet store had only 12 carriers available. The inadequate supply of carriers and muzzles could have presented difficulties for the safe evacuation of owners and their pets, had an evacuation been required.

The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006 requires states and localities to accommodate service animals and pets in their evacuation plans.

State and local jurisdictions should collaborate with private sector or pet advocacy organizations to provide muzzles and pet carriers at evacuation hubs. This can help facilitate the swift and safe evacuation of residents and their pets. The State of Texas after-action report noted that jurisdictions should consider working with national or local pet advocacy organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States or the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to acquire carriers.

CITATIONS

State of Texas Emergency Management, Governor's Division of Emergency Management. *2007 Hurricane Dean After-Action Report*. 26 Nov. 2007.
<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=32494>

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