

Pets should be part of evacuation plans

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bring their pets died during Hurricane Katrina, which struck the gulf coast of the U.S. in August 2005. It was the costliest natural disaster and one of the five deadliest hurricanes in the nation's history.

Veterinarian Dr. Meredith A. Steudle, of the state Department of Agriculture, said 150,000 pets died as a result of Katrina.

"Now we know people refuse to leave and human lives were lost as a result of that," she said.

Pagliughi said he does a number of presentations around the county and always asks how many people have pets. He asked participants in the conference how many had pets. Most in attendance raised their hands.

"How many people would leave your pets at home if you had to evacuate?" Pagliughi asked.

No one raised their hand.

During Katrina, some evacuated but returned to their homes too soon to check on their pets, Steudle said, increasing the risk to them and first responders. She

stressed the importance of planning ahead where pets will be sheltered during an emergency evacuation.

Options include pet-friendly hotels, leaving animals with family and friends, a County Animal Response Team (CART) shelter, a veterinarian's office outside the affected area and local and county animal shelters.

With a CART, there may be a human side of a shelter and an animal side of the shelter or pets may be kept at a different site, Steudle said.

"The only pets that are allowed in the human side of the shelter are true service animals, not support companion animals," she said.

Steudle said Cape May County has an animal evacuation trailer that can be set up in a moment's notice. In the past, the trailer has been stationed at the county airport. For those who evacuate to a hotel that is not pet-friendly, she recommended boarding a pet at a veterinarian's office in that area.

"Humane societies and animal shelters are another option,"

Steudle said. "The bottom line is, take your pet with you, do not leave them behind."

She recommended preparing a go bag for pets with items such as a collapsible water bowl and a two-week supply of food and water. Other items for a go bag include a leash, instructions for feeding your pet, veterinary records such as vaccinations and medical history, emergency contacts, medication, proof of ownership, microchip number, cleaning supplies, a muzzle and first aid items.

Dogs should wear their license that indicates they are current with rabies vaccinations.

"If you go to a CART shelter and take your pet and they are not current on their rabies, they have to actually isolate them and put them somewhere else in the shelter," Steudle said.

She said cats should always be transported in a carrier. Steudle recommended familiarizing pets with travel.

"If your pet hasn't left your house in 15 years, trying to get them in a carrier and taking them

somewhere out of your house the day of the evacuation will only add more stress to the animal," she said.

Steudle recommended having friends, relatives or neighbors familiar with your pet who can evacuate your animal if you are not able to return home in time.

Cape May County has an active CART team comprised of veterinarians, technicians, animal control officers and volunteers who love animals, she said. Those who wish to volunteer should contact the county Office of Emergency Management, according to Steudle.

As a result of Superstorm Sandy, the state created a website — animalemergency.nj.gov



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE
Veterinarian Dr. Meredith Steudle said 150,000 pets died as a result of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the gulf coast in 2005.

— that provides information on CARTs, go bags and a directory to the nearest veterinary hospital and pet food store.

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Landfall location

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things that are going to have to change in the next 20 years that people won't like the way they look, but if you're going to stay there, these are the things you have to do."

Atlantic City Electric Region President Vince Maione said steel poles are the strongest structures to withstand the wind and weather the county has experienced in the past few years. He said Atlantic City Electric has invested more than \$250 million in the county to make power-delivery systems more resilient.

"Just in 2016, we're making improvements to various substations and spending over \$150 million on making significant investments in our service territories and especially along the barrier islands upgrading our distribution system," Maione said.

Dan Skeldon, a meteorologist with The Press of Atlantic City, said the National Hurricane Center was predicting a 45 percent chance of an above-average number of storms. He said an average year in the Atlantic Ocean is 12 named tropical storms and hurricanes.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Meteorologist Dan Skeldon said hurricane predictions are useful only to a point. "These forecasts are great because they raise awareness but we cannot tell where they are going to go yet," he said.

In an average year, the Atlantic sees about six hurricanes, Skeldon said. The National Hurricane Center is predicting five to nine hurricanes this year. Of major hurricanes, a Category 3 storm or greater with winds of at least 115 mph, the prediction is for two to four storms, Skeldon said. The Weather Channel and Colorado State University are also predicting an above-average year for hurricanes, he said.

"Major national outlets do put out a hurricane forecast every year and they always put out numbers," he said. "They don't tell you where they're going to go, and that's the biggest fault."

Skeldon said hurricane predictions are useful only to a point. In 2010, the Atlantic region had 19 storms but not one hurricane hit the U.S., he said. It was a quiet year in terms of numbers in 1992 with seven storms, but Andrew, a Category 5 hurricane, devastated South Florida, Skeldon said.

"These forecasts are great because they increase awareness but we cannot tell where they are going to go yet," he said. "It only takes one storm to define a season."

Water temperatures in the tropical Atlantic and

east of Florida and the Carolinas are warmer than average, Skeldon. He said the biggest threat to Cape May County is storm surge, the amount of water on top of a regular tide. He said New Jersey would never get a Category 4 or Category 5 hurricane.

Skeldon said Sandy was a hurricane an hour before landfall but came ashore as a post-tropical storm, Irene wasn't a hurricane, the storm of 1962 was a nor'easter and the 1944 hurricane did not make landfall. The last landfall in New Jersey was in 1903, he said.

Pagliughi said a record-high tide of 9.2 feet was recorded at the Cape May-Lewes Ferry terminal in North Cape during Sandy.

"Up in Monmouth County, their gauge logged 14 feet. So whatever you had here in Hurricane Sandy, you could add 5 feet to it, if we took a hit like they did up there," he said.

"The worst thing is staying home and coming out and there's 5 or 6 feet of water in the street and you're not going anywhere and then the power goes out and then the next door house catches on fire," Pagliughi said. "That's the danger about it that people don't understand."

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