

# Service Animals and Shelters During Emergencies

**Shelters must allow service animals by law.**

**A service animal is any animal trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability (including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability).<sup>1</sup>**

A service animal is not considered a pet but rather an animal trained to assist people with disabilities.

Under the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), service animals are limited to dogs (and sometimes miniature horses).



**To determine whether the animal is a service animal, the shelter staff can only ask two questions:**

1. Do you require the animal because of a disability?
2. What tasks does your animal perform for you?

## During an emergency, you may have to evacuate or leave your home to go to a safer place. Consider these tips to help your service animal stay safe as well:

- **Get your service animal microchipped** by their veterinarian ahead of time. Registering the microchip can help you find your animal if you become separated.
- **Prepare an emergency kit for your service animal** ahead of time. Include everything your service animal will need, such as food, water, medication, leashes, beds, toys, and bags to get rid of their waste.
- **Place your and your service animal's important documents in a watertight container.** Your service animal's important documents can include copies of their medical records, vaccination certificates, microchip information, and any prescriptions.
- **Practice evacuating or leaving your home with your service animal** to make sure they understand what to do if there is an emergency.
- **If you're unsure how to care for your service animal in an emergency,** contact your animal's veterinarian, the local emergency management office, the animal shelter, or the animal control office for additional advice and information.



### Learn more at

[https://bit.ly/prepare-for-emergencies.](https://bit.ly/prepare-for-emergencies)

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Disability Rights Section. Service Animals. <https://www.ada.gov/topics/service-animals/>.