

# Is Your Kennel Ready for an Emergency Evacuation?

## Introduction:

Emergencies can be created by Mother Nature or manmade. In many areas where dog kennels exist, the threat of a forest fire is an annual concern. More than 10 years has passed since the Millers Reach fire in Big Lake and yet that event is still vivid in the memories of many dog mushers. Some kennels are close enough to creeks and rivers that the threat of a flood can warrant evacuation and we live with the thought of when will the next big earthquake strike.

We all leave home at one time or another. Some of us commute to work, leaving our kennels unmanned on a regular basis. Most of us leave the state for family business or a vacation every once in awhile. But just how prepared are you for an evacuation situation? It will be stressful even if you are there to coordinate the effort. How stressful will it be on your dogs if you can't be there?

We know that this community will come together should a crisis arise. But you know, better than anyone else, what your dogs need and how to handle them when they are stressed. Any planning you can do in advance of an emergency will make the actual situation that much easier on all concerned – including your dogs.

WDMA is advocating a plan of self reliance during emergency and disaster situations. Instead of burdening the boroughs limited resources during a major event, we would be utilizing a network of buddy kennels that are ready and willing to evacuate and temporarily house dogs in a safe location, should their home kennel be in jeopardy. We suggest that you choose at least two different kennels, in two very different locations, to cooperatively prepare for any type of situation where dogs need to be moved out of harm's way.

One kennel could be in our own community, but not in your immediate neighborhood. The second buddy kennel should be farther away in case the emergency situation involves all of the Willow area - Knik, Talkeetna, and Chugiak areas are all possibilities. If you do not know of any kennels, near or far, that would suit your purpose – contact WDMA and we'll help you make the connections and introductions. WDMA's goal is to give you as much information and support as possible for you to develop your own evacuation plan in which you use buddy kennels.

We are making these plans, hoping we will never need them. But should we find ourselves in an evacuation situation, we will all appreciate the advance planning when it comes to keeping our dogs safe.

## **Things to Ask Yourself:**

Each of us needs to take a moment to reflect on how we could better organize our kennels and equipment to make any evacuation more efficient and safe for all involved.

Take a moment and consider the following questions:

- 1) Could family, friends, your buddy kennel or community volunteers move your dogs to a safer location if you were not home? Where might that be?
- 2) How many dogs do you have and how many could you evacuate at one time?
  - a) If you couldn't take them all at once, how would you choose which ones to take first, knowing that you might not make it back or might not be allowed back on your property?
  - b) Is your dog truck, box or trailer ready at all times? Where do you keep the keys?
- 3) How fast can you load your dogs?
- 4) What medications should not be left behind?
- 5) Where is your proof of vaccinations?
- 6) What type of identification do you have for your dogs should one get loose or if they should be taken to a site where they could be mixed in with several other kennels? We know of a case where two mushers were both certain that a particular dog was theirs and nearly came to blows.
- 7) What food and feeding supplies will you need to take with you?
- 8) What cleaning and sanitizing supplies will you need to take with you?
- 9) Do you have other pets or animals that would also need to be moved? How?
- 10) Would your employer allow you to leave in an emergency situation to return home?

In some emergency situations, you may have sufficient warning to organize and gather supplies. Other times, it can come on quickly with very little advance warning. We've started gathering ideas on how to keep ourselves better prepared. Pick the ones you believe will work best for your unique situation. If you have additional suggestions you are willing to share with us, please do so. We view this as a living document and always welcome helpful ideas.

## **Ideas for Being Better Prepared:**

**Defensible Space** – provide large cleared space around your home and dog yard. Remove all deadfall and thin out fuel for fires (remove spruce trees and cut back undergrowth).

**Socialize** - your dogs so they are friendly with strangers. If needed, keep muzzles on hand. Train dogs to come back if they get off tether, or to go to the dog truck.

**Tethering Options** – keep enough drop chains/lines for all dogs in your dog truck. Martin Buser has re-organized the stake out posts in his dog yard. His chains now have two snaps – one at each end – so that his chains can be unsnapped quickly and every dog can be moved with their own drop chain. This provides safer transfer when handing a dog off to volunteers. It can be quickly snapped onto chain link fencing or chain tie outs. You will need to be more diligent and watch for wear and tear on snaps. Replace often when showing wear. Also bring a leash or long line to walk dogs. If you have extra chain, bring it. You may be in a situation where you are picking up or helping other dog kennels or pets.

**Medications** - label some type of waterproof container with Current Medications. Store where it can be easily seen and grabbed quickly. Be sure to provide ways to match meds up to the dogs needing each specific medication.

**First Aid Kit / Supplies** – Keep a kit packed and ready to grab quickly. Kits may include: vet wrap, gauze bandages, toe nail clippers, saline solution or eye drops, antibiotic creams, stapler (and staples), diluted iodine solution, antibiotic pills (several to choose from). Consider what injuries could be incurred as you evacuate and pack anything you would use to deal with those type of injuries once you arrive at the evacuation site.

**Cleaning Supplies** - store poop shovels, rakes, heavy duty plastic bags/bucket in dog truck. Store extra buckets, rags, paper towels, cleanser and bleach in dog truck to keep temporary/evacuation site as sanitary as possible.

**Feeding Supplies** - keep some food in waterproof containers that can be easily moved. Include dishes and feeding directions as well as a can opener, scoops, and spoons, if needed. Don't forget containers of water. Remember that these items might not come back after an emergency, so don't spend too much money. Label with permanent marker and/or paint.

## **Identification of Dogs/Animals:**

Identification of dogs is a major concern to us. Depending on the scope of the evacuation and how many kennels are involved, we are concerned about getting all dogs back to their rightful owners if for some reason your buddy kennel is not available or accessible. You should assume you would not be able to pick out each and every one of your dogs from say a group of 500 dogs. We are working on some ideas for identifying dogs from different kennels, but that will require more time and energy. You can help by figuring out your own system before hand. REMEMBER – No ID system is 100% foolproof.

**Micro chips** - are useful, but some fail to scan, some can migrate to different locations in the dog's body making them hard to locate. You also need to keep a list of numbers and dogs that it corresponds to. Therefore, keep additional copies of these lists with your veterinarian, a buddy kennel, and/or Mat-Su Animal Care. We are looking into sponsoring a low cost chip clinic in our area. (Let us know if you are interested!)

**Collar ID'S** - are another useful ID method, but they can be broken or slipped out of. There are engraved tags that hang, or engraved tags that can be sewn or slipped onto collars. You can also have info embroidered onto the collar or you can write the info on the collar in permanent marker. However, permanent markers eventually fade out.

Places on the internet where you can find cost effective ID tags are:

[www.nafpettags.com](http://www.nafpettags.com) or [www.luckpet.com](http://www.luckpet.com)

**Photos** – if you take photos of your dog(s) as an ID method make sure to include face and side view (just as if they were being booked into jail) and make sure to put yourself in some of the photos to prove ownership. Also note any unique or distinguishing features.

**Albums** – remember to keep info brief and concise on each dog. The album could include current photos, physical descriptions, temperament descriptions, necessary warning, medical info, map of dog yard placement, map of equipment storage and supplies needed. Include any info that protects dogs and volunteers who may be caring for your dogs. Note if dog has any physical ailments/conditions, intact for breeding or not, aggressive/fearful of strangers.

Keep album in location where it's easily seen and quickly grabbed. Consider making multiple copies and keep in distant location – perhaps at a buddy kennel or with a family member not living with you.

## **Other Ideas:**

**Wallet Card** - to alert authorities, should you be incapacitated, that you have animals at home requiring care.

**Buddy Kennel** - consider organizing a set of buddy kennels; possibly two or three mushers living in different neighborhoods that will work together if evacuation is needed; you help them, they help you. Become familiar with your buddy kennel(s) physical set up. Exchange dog truck keys, house keys, and pertinent information about the dogs. If you are not available, they will step in and direct an evacuation plan for you. So keep in touch and let them know your work schedule or when you'll be out of town.

**Evacuation Time** - do not wait for "mandatory" evacuation. Leave early – better to leave and later think it wasn't necessary rather than lose lives because you waited until it was absolutely necessary – only to have disaster cut you off from safety.

Be prepared and hope to never use it!

WDMA is keeping a database of information in order to facilitate the organization of buddy kennels and also for communication purposes during a potential emergency. All information shared will be used for emergency purposes only and not shared with any outside agency. Please consider keeping WDMA in the loop as you make your plans, so that our club may better serve the dog mushing community during any emergency situation that may present itself.

## **QUICK CHECK LIST**

### **SUPPLIES**

- √ Dog truck – ready to go
- √ Chains – at least one per dog
- √ Leashes, extra dog collars
- √ Tie out chain or cable
- √ Medications
- √ Food, bowls, scoops, etc.
- √ Water
- √ Poop bucket, shovel, heavy duty plastic bags
- √ Cleaning supplies – bleach, cleanser, rags, paper towels, etc.
- √ First Aid Kit

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION BINDER or ALBUM**

- √ Shot records
- √ Dog identification – chip #'s, photos of dogs with you, collar ID, etc.
- √ List of dogs on medications – dose and frequency
- √ Note special information about individual dogs (shy, aggressive, blind, deaf, and intact for breeding, physical ailments.)
- √ A physical description of dogs (size, weight, age, color.)
- √ Contact information for you and Buddy Kennel(s)
- √ Map of Kennel, dog location (name of dog if possible), location of supplies
- √ Keep information easily accessible. Keep at least one copy with a Buddy and a third copy in at a distant location (possibly relatives).

### **BUDDY SYSTEM**

Choose one or more people to exchange information about your kennel. Someone who would know your dogs, and kennel set up, and be able to help you during an evacuation. Give them a copy of your information binder/ album. This person could be contacted if you are not available during an emergency evacuation.