

## FEMA AND HUMANE SOCIETY OF UNITED STATES SIGN HISTORIC AGREEMENT

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### FEMA AND HUMANE SOCIETY OF UNITED STATES SIGN HISTORIC AGREEMENT TO PROTECT AMERICA'S ANIMALS

WASHINGTON (November 13, 2000) AP The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has signed an historic partnership agreement with The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to encourage and assist communities and individuals to include animals in emergency management plans and disaster mitigation programs. FEMA Director James Lee Witt and HSUS Senior Director of Disaster Relief and Field Services, Melissa Seide Rubin, signed the agreement of cooperation between the two agencies at the recent FEMA Project Impact Summit in Washington, DC.

More than 60 percent of America's households include animals: a fact that underscores the need for emergency and disaster plans to include pets and animals. The new partnership between HSUS and FEMA, part of FEMA's new Project Impact program, will involve a cooperative effort to improve the public's understanding of the importance of disaster preparedness for humans and their animal companions.

"This agreement between HSUS and FEMA is designed to save lives," explains Rubin. "The primary reason people choose not to evacuate their homes when asked to do so by emergency management is because they feel they cannot take their pets with them. With this initiative, we hope to work with FEMA to educate the public to adequately plan for their

animals in their individual and their community disaster plans."

Project Impact is a FEMA initiative designed to help communities change their approach to disasters by building 'disaster-resistant communities' through public-private partnerships. HSUS will participate with FEMA in Project Impact by providing technical expertise, developing methodologies, and assisting communities and individuals develop effective disaster plans that address the needs of animals and their owners. The community planning process will involve all animals, not just dogs and cats, but horses and farm animals as well.

HSUS's Disaster Relief and Regional Office staff, strategically located around the country, cooperate with state and local emergency managers as well as other national and local humane organizations. HSUS has extensive experience with the evacuation and rescue of animals during disasters. HSUS set up emergency animal shelters during the recent Los Alamos fires, rescued animals from floods during Hurricane Floyd, managed relief efforts during the recent Montana wildfires, and performed extensive rescue and relief efforts during the 1996 Red River floods.

"People often ignore the need to plan for an emergency for themselves and their animals," Rubin pointed out. "They assume if they are not in a flood plain or near an earthquake fault line or a coastal area, they are without risk. From vast experience, HSUS knows that this assumption and lack of preparedness can be financially and emotionally devastating. A fire, a train derailment, or a hazardous spill can happen anywhere. Lack of preparedness by communities is often deadly to both animals and their owners.

"We are pleased to be working with FEMA to assist communities, community-based animal organizations, as well as individuals identify their potential hazards and designed effective disaster plans. We applaud FEMA's recognition that the inclusion of animals is critical to effective emergency management."

The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization with more than seven million members and constituents. The HSUS is dedicated to the protection of all animals. HSUS Disaster Services, with the support of private sector partners, is dedicated to advocating and educating the public about proper planning for animals in emergencies and to rescuing animals during natural and man-made disasters.

For more information about the HSUS/FEMA agreement and how it can affect disaster planning for animals in your community, contact HSUS Disaster Services, (301) 258-3103, or [aculver@hsus.org](mailto:aculver@hsus.org).

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