



www.vancouverhumanesociety.bc.ca

Attn: Citizen Engagement
EPA Modernization
PO BOX 9484 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 9W6

January 27, 2020,

Dear EPA Modernization team,

I am writing to submit comment from the Vancouver Humane Society (VHS) to the proposed modernization of the Emergency Program Act (EPA). As a registered charity dedicated to the humane treatment of animals, we have particular concerns about the impact of disasters and emergencies on animals.

Our chief concern is that current legislation does not require local officials to include domestic animals as part of their plans, which we believe puts not only animals at risk but also their guardians. In 2005, an estimated 600,000 pets were killed or stranded by Hurricane Katrina. According to media reports, many people did not evacuate because they would not leave their pets behind. It is also commonly reported that individuals returned to evacuation zones, putting themselves at risk and hindering emergency responders. A similar pattern has since been reported in other major emergencies. Including animals in emergency planning could help address these issues, potentially saving both human and animal lives.

It should also be noted that there is considerable benefit to keeping pets with their families during emergencies and evacuations, as they provide invaluable psychosocial support during a traumatic experience.

In addition to family pets, animals held in establishments such as zoos, aquariums, kennels, sanctuaries and breeding facilities, are also at risk during emergencies. The EPA should ensure local authorities include these facilities in their emergency plans and provide them with guidance and support in implementing them.

While the protection of human life is paramount, there is strong public empathy for animals during emergencies and it is likely that any perception of negligence by authorities in this regard would lead to equally strong public disquiet.

We urge you to ensure the modernization of the EPA includes a clear requirement of local authorities to include provisions to protect animals during emergencies and to have the resources needed to carry out such protection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Morris', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Amy Morris
Executive Director