



March 2015

Dear Chief Elected Official:

In March 2014, MA Senate Bill 1172, "An Act Ensuring the Safety of People with Pets in Disasters," was signed into law. This law requires Massachusetts cities and towns to have a plan in place "to include strategies to support the needs of people with household pets and the needs of household pets under their care, including service animals" before, during and after an emergency or natural disaster. The best defense for a disaster is a prepared and practiced plan. There are numerous challenges in developing plans for animal evacuation and sheltering, which can only be solved by creative ideas and innovative programs.

This letter is to introduce you, as the Chief Elected Official, to this new law. Implementation of this law will require a cooperative effort between your town or city Emergency Manager, Animal Control Officer, and many others - with the full backing of Senior Town Officials and various Department Heads. The State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team (SMART) is available to assist in the implementation of the law in your city or town by providing resources and information about best practices.

One of the roles you can play as the Chief Elected Official is to help educate pet owners and town leaders about how to include animals in emergency management plans. This new law provides for animals before, during and after disasters and may include control, evacuation and sheltering of animals. There are two different types of emergency animal shelters:

- **Temporary Shelter:** animals are mainly cared for by members of a sheltering organization and volunteers who are trained in animal handling until animals can be returned to their owners.
- **Co-location Shelter:** located in the immediate vicinity of the human shelter which allows the pet owners to be more involved with their pets' daily care.

The latter offers more advantages and should be the first goal of any sheltering plan. It is recommended that a site be chosen in advance of any disaster. When possible, it is best to collaborate with people responsible for the human shelter. A co-location arrangement can be a benefit to both to both people and their pets. Some types of facilities to consider would be animal care facilities, fairground facilities, warehouses and school/university buildings. Each shelter site will need certain amenities to provide the best care for the animals. The following links can help you get started in your planning.

<http://www.smartma.org> (go to "resources")

<http://www.nasaaep.org> (go to "library" for best practices)

<http://www.drc-group.com/project/dart.html>

Additionally, please see the list below of existing animal response teams. You can contact the one closest to you for local resources:

- Berkshire DART (<http://wmdart.org/teams/berkshire-county/>)
- Cape Cod DART (<http://www.ccdart.org>)
- Central MA DART (<http://www.cmdart.org>)
- Hampshire Emergency Animal Response Team (Hampshire County - <http://wmdart.org/teams/h-e-a-r-t/>)
- Hudson DART (<https://sites.google.com/site/hudsonmrcdart/home>)
- Martha's Vineyard DART (Rita Brown, Assistant Emergency Management Director, [rabrown1950@comcast.net](mailto:rabrown1950@comcast.net) or 508-221-8347)

In the process of working on your emergency plan feel free to contact SMART at [info@SMARTma.org](mailto:info@SMARTma.org). We are here to help. Please note that we are sending a similar letter to your Town or City Emergency Management Director and Animal Control Officer.

David Schwarz, D.V.M., President, S.M.A.R.T.



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**AN ACT ENSURING THE SAFETY OF PEOPLE WITH PETS IN DISASTERS**

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*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:*

SECTION 1. Section 1 of chapter 639 of the acts of 1950, as amended by section 1 of chapter 579 of the acts of 1968, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "persons" the following words:- and household pets and service animals, as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 5170b,.

SECTION 2. Said section 1 of said chapter 639, as so amended, is hereby further amended by adding the following paragraph:-

Any emergency plan of operations shall include strategies to support the needs of people with household pets and the needs of household pets under their care, including service animals. The local organization for civil defense shall take appropriate steps to educate the public regarding the resources available in the event of an emergency and the importance of emergency preparedness planning.

SECTION 3. Any emergency plan of operations shall be consistent with sections 1 and 2 not later than 12 months after the effective date of this act.

Approved, March 24, 2014.

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