

## Dr. Justine A. Lee, DVM, DACVECC

Justine has more than 18 years of experience in the veterinary industry and is a board-certified emergency critical care veterinary specialist and toxicologist as well as the CEO and founder of Vetgirl. She is also a founding member of IDEXX's Pet Health Network team.

[KTLA 5 reports](#) that earlier this month, Southern California was saturated with heavy rain, resulting in severe mudslides for Ventura County. Several homes had to be evacuated as a result. During the mudslide, Henry Needham and his wife became trapped in their home, which was covered with two feet of mud. [According to NBC Los Angeles](#), while the couple was eventually rescued by firefighters, their dog, Tinkerbelle, was presumed dead.

Thankfully, the next day, the couple's grandson noticed movement in the house. It turns out, Tinkerbelle made it to a window, and was able to attract attention. The Ventura County Fire Department was able to rescue Tinkerbelle. She was reunited with an emotional guardian soon afterwards.

### Protecting your pets from natural disasters.

When natural disasters happen, it's easy to be overwhelmed, but don't forget about your four-legged friend! Here are a few clues on how to make sure you are prepared:

**1. Have your pet is microchipped - this is key to being reunited with your dog or cat days or even weeks after a disaster!**

**2. Pack an emergency disaster backpack that you can grab quickly. Make sure you include the following:**

- A few cans of pop-top pet food (as you likely will not have access to a can opener!). These cans stay good even past their expiration date, provided the can is intact and not dented or opened.
- A plastic bowl for water
- A leash or pillow case (in case of emergency transport for a cat)
- A photocopy of your ID, address, and contact phone numbers

- A copy of vaccine records for your pet
- A photo of your pet
- At least 1-2 weeks of your pet's prescription medication
- An extra collar with a pet identification tag on it
- A copy of your pet's latest health certificate, vaccine records, and medical records in a sealed, watertight plastic bag.
- A few extra doses of heartworm preventive pills and flea/tick preventive medication
- Extra plastic bags (poop bags)
- A basic first aid kit
- A small flashlight with extra batteries
- For cat owners – don't forget a quart size bag full of kitty litter too!

With a natural disaster, don't give up hope – thankfully, dogs and cats are often smart enough to move and hide on safer grounds during disaster. Most importantly, make sure to keep yourself safe first. If possible, grab your emergency disaster pack immediately (which should be stored in the front closet or an easily accessible area).

Thankfully, for Tinkerbelle, a happy reunion was able to occur. A huge shout out to the Ventura County Fire Department who responded and carried out the rescue.