

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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**BULLETIN NO. 57**

**SEPTEMBER 2006 (Reissued)**

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**GUIDELINES FOR ANIMALS IN DISTRESS**

Although most calls for Fire Department assistance in rescues of animals involve the removal of cats from trees, there are many varieties of trapped animal situations which might be encountered such as animals trapped in sewers, walls, chimneys, elevator shafts, and on roofs of building. For this reason, each situation must be individually evaluated and hard and fast rules cannot always apply. The following procedures shall be used to evaluate whether Fire Department assistance is required and if such assistance is advisable:

1. Upon receipt of a request for assistance from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) or other recognized animal organization, Office of Unified Communications (OUC) shall inquire as to whether the animal organization has a representative on the scene. If a representative is not on the scene, OUC shall request that one be sent. If such agent is at the scene of the emergency, the agent will be requested to remain there until the arrival of the Fire Department. The nearest available Battalion Fire Chief shall then be dispatched (in-service on the air) to determine if Fire Department service is required and if such service is advisable.
2. When requests for help are received from other than representatives of recognized animal organizations such as the Police Department or private citizens, OUC shall, when possible, notify Animal Control that their presence is requested at the scene. OUC shall also inquire as to the estimated time of arrival of Animal Control. The nearest available Battalion Fire Chief shall then be dispatched (in-service on the air) to evaluate the situation.
3. When situations permit, the actual handling of the animal shall be undertaken by the representative of Animal Control.

Among the items which should be considered in animal situations are the following:

1. Is someone available to cage or handle the animal after release?
2. If the animal has been seriously injured, have arrangements been made for veterinarian care or destruction of the animal after release?
3. Is there danger to the public if the animal is released?

4. What dangers are posed to FEMS personnel, and does the situation warrant such risk?

**Note:** Animal Control can be contacted directly at 202-576-6664 and the Washington Humane Society can be contacted at 202-723-5730.