



Emergency Communication Guide

It's an EMERGENCY!!! Or is it?

It may sound unnecessary, but providing clarity of how your business defines an emergency is important to get everyone on the same page. The definitions also become part of your Communication Guidelines. Your guidelines help all team members know when, how and who to contact in the event of an emergency. You may even get a break from all the calls when you implement step three of our plan.

Step 1: There are different types of emergencies operating a pet care business and we have a list to get you started. We've also shared a short definition and recommend you expand on ours with examples from your business.

Animal – Illness or accident that requires immediate veterinary care (e.g., bloat, heat stroke, severe bleeding)

Client – Communicating animal emergency situation or dissatisfied client that your efforts to resolve have not been successful.

Staff – Illness or accident that requires immediate medical attention or situation where there are concerns for the safety of other staff and/or animals.

Facility/Business – Physical damage that puts staff, animals or contents at risk (e.g., smoke/fire, broken lock or window, water shut-off, fence damage)

Step 2: Specify the communication format to be used for emergencies. Do you want staff to call, text or email? Does the time of day of the emergency change the format?

Business Hours – Contact the onsite supervisor in charge (e.g., in person, two-way radio or cell phone).

After Hours – Call manager assigned to “on call” duty; if they do not answer, call back-ups until you reach and speak to a manager.

Step 3: Create emergency contact phone list and On Call Calendar. Creating a management team “on call” schedule ensures everyone gets a break from the business. Quarterly the management team should review their calendars and rotate shifts to serve as the “on call manager contact” for after-hours emergencies. Share the calendar and emergency contact numbers with the onsite supervisors in charge.

Bonus Tip: Now that you've created a communication guide for emergencies think about expanding and defining a plan for:

- Help Needed: Issues, problems, or questions that require manager input, but are not an emergency.
- Information Sharing: Fun, nice to know, good news and successes that management wants to know.

The digital age makes communication 24/7 and an important tool to avoid burnout is to take time creating clear Communication Guidelines for your business.