

# Do you have a plan for emergencies?

*Trains crashed, derailed, spilling hazardous chemicals resulting in the evacuation of 16,000 residents of Bloomfield, Pa., and perhaps 31,000 more.*

By Marge Jones, Whitaker, Pa.

I've often wondered what we would do with all of our birds if faced with emergency evacuation. The weekend of Apr. 11, [1987], in Pittsburgh made me give some serious thought on the subject. Two Conrail trains crashed and derailed spilling hazardous chemicals resulting in the evacuation of some 16,000 residents of the Bloomfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh. At one point serious consideration was given to the evacuation of a three mile area with a population of 31,000. The train that derailed did pass within a mile of our residence. For me that's just a little too close for comfort.

As I see this, the problem is three-fold. First the logistics of moving, in a hurry, some 60 cockatiels, five larger birds, the dog, and ourselves is overwhelming. What's needed is a definite plan of action. **Enough small cages that could hold between 6 and 8 cockatiels apiece and fit into your car [vehicle] would be needed.**

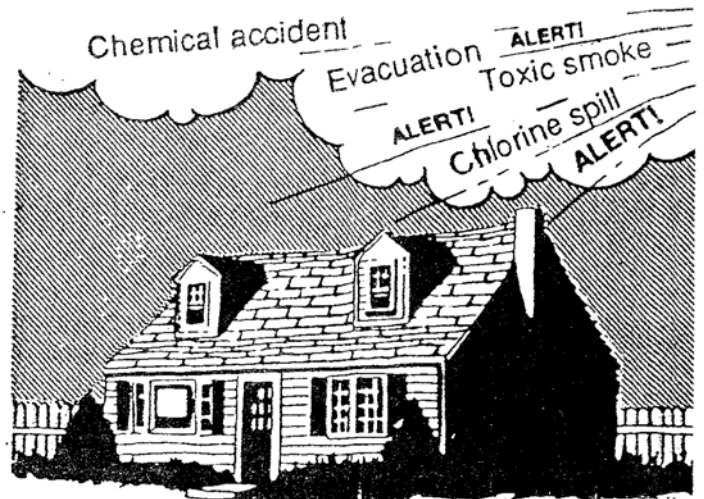
**When building flight cages, most people don't think about making them to fit through a standard door.**

We could use our breeder cages for all our cockatiels. This would definitely take two trips, one for the cockatiels and one for our larger birds. The help of a close friend would be a great help.

The second part of the problem: **where to take the birds.** During the emergency in Pittsburgh most people went to designated areas. The conventions center and civic arena were set up to help. On the TV news, we saw dogs and cats, but no birds. I would like to take them to a home of a close friend or relative, but those arrangements need to be made well ahead of time. After all, in an emergency there may not be time to ask.

Thirdly, all these plans would be dependent on the seasonal weather conditions. **In freezing weather,** it would not be possible to move the birds. The best thing in that case would be to **stay put and try to keep any toxic smoke or fumes from entering the premises.** The windows could be tightly sealed with plastic type storm windows.

Thinking about this, it really is a sad commentary on the times in which we live. I hope we never have to find out if a smooth evacuation could actually be accomplished. Pittsburgh was lucky that weekend — only one person had to be hospitalized. The time of the incident and the weather conditions were favorable, but it did give all of us something to think about. I just wish our legislators would give some serious thought to controlling the transport of hazardous chemicals through heavily populated areas, instead of worrying about how they can control the breeding and selling of birds.



**What hazards might you face where you live?**

Can you evacuate your birds speedily? Do you have enough transportable cages or pet carriers to put them in? Can your transportation contain them? Is there a safe place somewhere? Do you have enough food in a convenient container to feed them, their regular water bottled? Do an emergency checklist!

## Chlorine spill threatens bird aviary

Dandy is a small community in York County where I keep my birds — about 80 of them. We have an entire oil refinery within two and a half miles with all kinds of possible noxious gases, but at 7 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 3, 1993, the word came that the Fire Department was coming to evacuate us, because 1,500 lbs. of chlorine had leaked out of a gas cylinder following a valve breakage at the York River Wastewater Treatment Plant about three miles away.

Three hours later, the cylinder was capped, its surrounding floor covered with two inches of chlorine crystals. **About 50 homes on the streets closest to the plant were evacuated for about two hours.** I had more to think about as a family head, a community contact for emergencies and newswriter for the local press than having time for saving the birds.

As the emergency waned, a dog breeder I had once written a story about called, said she had heard of the emergency on the radio, called to find out if I could use a place for the birds at her home (in a safe area) and she had some crates I could use. What a nice lady!

It's past time to write our emergency plans, to include highwater and flood emergencies. — Dick Ivy.

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## Aviary Management

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