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Hurricane Sandy has shined a spotlight on the importance of emergency preparedness. Does your store have an emergency response plan?

- Yes
- No, but I plan to create one
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**Online Certification Launched for Pet Care Professionals**

Posted: Nov. 16, 2012, 4:45 p.m. EST

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A new online school, Outstanding Pet Care University, last week started a certification program designed to train the staffs of pet lodging businesses, grooming salons and training centers.

The program was unveiled at the Barkleigh Pet Boarding and Daycare Expo in Baltimore.

"People who attended [Barkleigh] are eager for education," said university co-owner Joanne Morris, who operates Morris Animal Inn in Morristown, N.J. "They are there for the seminars, and they want to improve their businesses, so we figured it would be a great place to launch."

The bankruptcy this year of the Pet Care Services Association created a void in pet care education, said Kelly Vanasse, spokeswoman for the Wilton, Conn.-based university.

Morris and co-owner Laura Laaman purchased the association's assets in May, added expert content from professionals such as veterinarians and created the online format.

"We wanted to create a standardized education course that store owners and managers can use to train their staffs," Morris added. "It is just the starting point and will evolve as time goes on."

The [Level One certification program](#) consists of 11 classes, each taking 45 minutes to an hour to complete. A test is administered at the end of each session, and participants must receive a passing grade to move to the next class.

"Each class is designed to be reinforced with hands-on training," Morris emphasized. "It really reinforces standards and the quality of pet care, and this way we can ensure everyone is getting the same information to provide that quality care."

The 11-class program costs \$199 per employee, and individual classes are priced at \$19.95. The courses include "Canine and Feline Familiarization," "Getting Started in Providing Quality Pet Care," "Employee Safety in the Pet Care Facility" and "Introduction to Grooming."

Pet care providers certified with the [Pet Care Services Association](#) may be recertified under

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"Introduction to Grooming" is among the courses offered by Outstanding Pet Care University.

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the university's program, Morris stated.

Anyone who completes the program receives a certification, a listing in an online directory, and a mention through news releases and social media.

"Our hope is to raise the level of standards across the board," Morris noted. "We want to set ourselves apart from pet facilities [that] haven't made the same investment in training."

Advanced certification programs for managers are expected to begin in January 2013.

Morris and Laaman also plan to educate pet owners through the website.

"Leaving a loved pet in the home of a stranger or in the care of someone without proper pet care training hardly gives pet owners the peace of mind they deserve when traveling or working," Morris added.

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