



Disaster preparedness is important for all animals, but it takes extra consideration for horses because of their size and the requirements for transporting them. Disasters such as wild fires, hazardous materials spills, ice storms, floods and train derailments can happen anywhere. Any of these emergencies may necessitate evacuation, so it is imperative that you are prepared to move your horses to a safe area.

During an emergency, the time you have to evacuate your horses will be limited. With an effective emergency plan, you may have enough time to move your horses to safety. If you are unprepared or wait until the last minute to evacuate, you could be told by emergency management officials that you must leave your horses behind. Once you leave your property, you have no way of knowing how long you will be kept out of the area. If left behind, either loose in a field or in a barn, your horses could be unattended for days without care, food, or water. To help you minimize the risk of this happening, we have prepared information and suggestions to help you plan for emergencies.

**Make a list of all resources** — feed, supplies, vets, EMTs, truckers. Include all emergency telephone numbers (police, fire, hospital — vet and human — EMT, poison control). **WRITE IT DOWN.** Make copies: this information should be available at various locations on the farm.

- \* Have a current list of the horses on the farm or in the stable.
  - ☛ What paddock and stall are they in?
  - ☛ Who are the owners or contact persons and what are their telephone numbers?
  - ☛ A written procedure on what is to be said to owners/agents in a disaster?
  - ☛ Records of feeding, vaccinations, Coggins, amount of hay and feed and what kind given to each animal should be available. **WRITE IT DOWN.**
- \* Have a job description of who does what during an emergency.
- \* Have a phone tree of all key personnel and make sure they know how to use it.
- \* Have a drill every quarter in the barn regarding a disaster.
- \* Who does what? Who calls who? **DON'T PANIC. REMAIN CALM**
- \* Post your plan in a clearly visible place.
- \* Make sure that everyone who lives, works or boards at your barn is familiar with the plan.

### Get to know your neighbors and their animals.

- \* Select a Neighborhood Coordinator who is familiar with your evacuation plan and will be ready to assist should a disaster occur when you are not at home.
- \* Learn to handle your neighbors' animals and identify those which have special handling needs (i.e. stallions).
- \* Post an updated phone list (home and office) of all neighbors and anyone who boards at your facility.
- \* Keep your barns street address clearly posted to relay to the community emergency services

Store combustibles such as hay, straw, wood, shavings and/or gasoline away from animal barns.

### Make An Emergency Evacuation Kit

If flames are licking at the barn door, the last thing you want to be doing is scrambling around trying to find halters, lead ropes, and buckets. Assemble an evacuation kit before the crisis strikes, and keep it in an easily accessible place (such as your trailer, if you have one). In your kit, include:

- ☛ At least a 3-day supply of food (hay and grain), plus two buckets (for food and water) for every horse. If you have a way to transport water, such as the specially designed, watertight plastic saddle stands made for trailer travel, or other such large, watertight containers, fill them. Water can be hard to come by in a disaster, so you'll better ensure that your horse has a safe supply.
- ☛ Have a halter and lead rope for every horse. Add stud chains in case you need them for extra control. *Tip:* Have dog tags made, with the horse's name, plus your name, address, and phone number. Or, write the info on each halter with a permanent marker. Some have spray painted the left rear with phone numbers. That way, if your horse should escape or be moved, you'll have a better chance of him being returned to you.

- ✦ Copies of registration papers, brand-inspection records, and health records—including a negative Coggins
- ✦ At least a 3-day supply of any medications your horse might need. Have several photos of each horse to aid in identification. Horses and pets may be shuffled from one site to another during a chaotic situation.
- ✦ Create a script and follow it during a disaster.
- ✦ Put your name and the barn's name on halters or emergency I.D. tags

During a disaster, it is not unusual for horses to be unwilling to leave their stalls or corrals. If fire or smoke is a danger to them, they must be led out and placed in a secured area. Be able to lead your horse(s) out to a paddock during a fire emergency. Stay as calm as possible. Place them as far away from the fire as possible. Plan out an emergency evacuation and practice it.

✦ Emergencies do occur at night. Do practice an evacuation drill at night with your horses. Use flashlights so your horses will become used to them. Remain calm, as horses will react to panic and fear.

### **Wear safe attire**

In the event that you are involved in a fire, the right clothes can help shield you from radiant heat, burning embers and flames.

- \* Cotton fabrics are preferable to synthetics. Synthetics will melt and can cause serious burns!
- \* Wear long pants and a long-sleeved shirt with the sleeves down.
- \* Sturdy leather gloves, while cumbersome, are essential to protect your hands from painful and disabling burns.
- \* Leather or “vibram” type slip-resistant shoes are the only safe footwear. Tennis shoes or rubber shoes will melt, causing serious burns.
- \* Wear a cotton bandana “bandit style” to shield your face. While wet cloth is more effective in smoke, the moisture can also cause serious steam burns to your face and respiratory system.
- \* Goggles will help protect your eyes from smoke and burning embers. Condition your horse to your strange appearance ahead of time!
- \* Always buy and use fire-safe gear on your horse. The same principles for “fire safe clothing” apply to your horse.

### **Riding It Out**

If you can't evacuate, or doing so would be more dangerous to you than staying put, use the following tips:

- \* Before water lines break or power goes down, fill several large, clean 30- to 55-gallon plastic garbage cans with drinking water for your horses. (Don't forget your family and pets!) You'll need a 3- to 10-day supply.
- \* Set out flashlights and lanterns, along with a supply of fresh batteries. Consider turning out your horses in safely fenced pasture with shelter. Generally, they'll be safer in a pasture than in a barn, which could burn or collapse.
- \* Close barn doors, so panicked horses can't run back inside.
- \* Turn off power and gas lines.

### **After a Disaster**

Check pastures thoroughly for debris that can be dangerous and downed fences. Fencing failures are one of the four leading causes of death of large animals during disasters. Look out for wildlife that may be unusually present.

### **JUST DO IT!**

It has been shown time and time again that if you don't take the above precautions within the next 24 hours, the chances are very good you won't do anything at all to prepare for a fire emergency.