

Long Range Disaster Planning

Safety Provisions for Equines

Natural disasters such as flash floods, tornados, snowstorms or wildfires, and man-made problems such as gas explosions, leaking tank cars, and terrorist incidents, can happen with little or no warning. The nature of the emergency may determine whether to shelter in place or evacuate.

Developing an effective personal emergency plan, coupled with *preselected* holding facilities, may allow you enough time to move your horses to safety. If you are unprepared or wait until the last minute to evacuate, emergency management officials may tell you 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.

Do not count on others to rescue your animals. Preparation for an emergency evacuation is important for all animals, but requires extra consideration for horses because of their size and transportation needs. Horses can panic when they smell smoke. If you delay evacuation until fire danger is imminent, you may not be able to control and load your horses.

To avoid this situation, the following information and suggestions are offered to help plan for emergencies:

1. **Familiarize yourself** with the types of disasters/emergencies that could occur in your area. **Develop a written plan** of action for each. **Review** your plan regularly with everyone involved, including friends and neighbors. **Post emergency numbers** in a visible location in your stable or barn.
 - Plan an escape route for taking your horses to safety.
 - If you do not have a trailer or enough trailers for evacuation, make arrangements in advance to have your horses trailered in case of emergency. Develop a community plan with call-up lists for assistance.
 - Find several alternative locations and check entry requirements. If you have no other safe place, contact your local fairgrounds.
2. **Identify the best location** on your property for animal confinement for each type of disaster, should you be unable to evacuate them. Identify food and water sources that do not rely on electricity. Disasters cause

power outages; water pumps and automatic waterers cease working. Have standby water storage for 48 to 72 hours.

3. **Photograph** the left and right sides of each horse as well as face and medial and lower legs. Have a photo of your horse **with you in the picture**, to help identify the horse as yours when picking it up from an evacuation area.
4. **Record name, breed, sex, age, color and markings**, and keep copies with your important papers. You can permanently identify your horse by tattoo, brand or microchip. Temporary identification by tags on the fetlocks and halters, painted on hooves, or painted on side of the horse are options.
5. **Keep vaccinations and boosters up-to-date.** Keep these records, and a list of any medications, health products, and any dietary requirements, with your important papers and with your Emergency Plan.
6. **Keep your horse trailer and towing vehicle insured**, in good condition, and checked for safety. Keep your towing vehicle gas tank at least half full. The animal's New Mexico Hauling Permit (passport) should be kept with important papers, and copies kept in the towing vehicle.
7. **Make sure your horse will load!** Your trailer is useless if you cannot get the horse to go in. Rescuers may not have the time or the expertise to load an unwilling horse.
8. **Keep hay, supplemental feed, and buckets on hand and ready to go.** Consider keeping a tranquilizer on hand should a horse become panicked during a crisis – ask your veterinarian what is available and what you are allowed to administer.
9. **Each horse needs a designated, non-nylon halter and lead rope** hung outside its stall or with a posted copy of your emergency plan. Information attached to the halter should include: horse's name and any feed and medication instructions, your name, phone numbers for you, your veterinarian, and at least one backup person.
10. **Transport or prepare to transport** your horse to a safe evacuation site. It is best to do this before it is an emergency, even several days in advance. Do not wait until the last minute to remove your animals.
11. **Mandatory evacuation.** If you must leave your horses when you evacuate, make sure that all the preparations to keep them on the

property are in place, that they are wearing halters with ID or temporary markings, and turn them loose on your secured property.

12. Your **Disaster Preparedness Kit** should be ready at the barn door.
Suggested items:

- Water and feed buckets, hoof pick,
- Fire resistant (non-nylon) halters and leads
- First Aid kits for humans and animals
- Flashlight
- Medical records and medications
- Horse papers and photos (proof of ownership)
- Sharp knife, wire cutters, fence cutters
- Jar of Vicks VapoRub (if rubbed in the horse's nostrils, it masks the smell of smoke).
- Extra cotton rope – 20 to 30 feet.
- A jacket for you for cold nights, raincoat
- Gloves
- Scarf and medical mask to prevent smoke inhalation
- Butazolidin paste and horse treats
- Two-way radio if possible

13. **Take action early and be decisive.**

When the all-clear sounds, be careful about returning your animals to your property too soon. Familiar scents and landmarks may be lost. Downed power lines, fallen trees and other debris, contaminated water or feed, or lingering smoke could present real dangers. Check all fences and gates. The presence of emergency vehicles and aircraft can stress horses; hold them off site till the emergency is well over and things are more normal.

*Information provided by the **New Mexico Horse Council** (www.nmhorsecouncil.org) and **Eldon Reyer** of the Northern New Mexico Horsemen's Association.*