



Long Range Disaster Planning Preparing to Care for Your Horse

National disasters such as flash floods, tornados, snow storms or wild fires, 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 predetermined holding facilities, you may have 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. Being prepared for an emergency evacuation is important for all animals, but it takes extra consideration for horses because of their size and their 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 Fair Grounds.
2. Look at your property and identify the best location 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 – disaster cause power outages – water pumps and automatic waterers stop 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 its name, breed, sex, age, color and markings, and keep copies with 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 your horses' vaccinations and boosters up-to-date, dosages and types of medications/health products the animal receives and any dietary requirements. Keep copies of these with your important papers and with your Emergency Plan.
6. Keep your horse trailer and towing vehicle insured, and in good condition, and checked for safety. Keep your towing vehicle gas tank at least half full.

7. Make sure your horse will load! Your trailer is useless if you cannot get the horse to go in. Rescuers may not be able to take the time to load an unwilling horse.

8. Keep hay and supplemental feed on hand. 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. Have a halter and lead rope designated for each horse and hang it outside its stall or with a posted copy of your emergency plan. Attach information to the halter that includes: horse's name, your name, your phone number, veterinarian's name and number, other phone numbers where someone can be reached, and any feed or medication instructions.

10. Keep extra feed/hay and buckets ready to go with your horses when evacuated.

11. 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.

12. If you must leave your horses when you evacuate (mandatory evacuation), 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.

13. Prepare a Disaster Preparedness Kit and have it 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 Vapor Rub to put in horses nostrils
- Extra cotton rope – 20 to 30 feet
- A jacket for you for cold nights, raincoat
- Gloves
- Scarf and medical mask to prevent smoke inhalation
- Bute paste and treats
- Two-way radio if possible

14. 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, or contaminated water could present real dangers as well as linger smoke. 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 for Northern New Mexico Horsemen's Association.