Are you ready!

Disaster Planning Presentation:

Plan
Prepare
Implement

There is a reason evacuation are considered emergencies. These can be in form of fire, earthquake, flood, mudslide and possibly more. The bottom line is that it’s an emergency. The actions you take ahead of time help determine the outcome of the emergency pertinent to you. By taking small steps in advance, you will have less to worry about when Mother Nature comes screaming down in the middle of the night.

Emergencies don’t give us warning that they are coming, they don’t give us time to plan or pack; they just happen. Or do they? We may not see the emergency itself but often there are signs that a possible emergency may develop. We watch the weather and watch the risk increase but instead of preparing, we hope we won’t have to worry so we sit and watch without acting, hoping it won’t affect us. This is a critical and common element to not being ready for these emergencies.

*Plan* well ahead so you are ready when you need to prepare

*Prepare* when you see concerning weather forecasts that may result in an emergency evacuation. This includes fire weather watch, severe rains, possible mudslides, high winds

*Implement* when evacuation becomes necessary
I. Plan

Gear and Equipment

Once you start your planning, the rest falls into place. There are certain things you can do on a regular basis that help not only during a disaster but also in a personal emergency. These are the constant planning steps and reduce the number of things you need to worry about when an emergency happens.

If you have a trailer and use it regularly, it’s easier to keep it ready than to have to prepare it each time you use it.

1. Each time you use it, refill water tanks at once upon return of your trip (if it’s been hot, empty and refill). This makes it easier for your next trip and gives you one less thing to worry about if (when) there is an emergency.
2. Rehang all equipment and make sure it’s in its proper place.
3. When you unhook, set all connection equipment in an order that allows for quick hook up for the next trip, create a pattern.
4. Make sure your Hide-a-key is in its proper place.

Annual and semiannual equipment Planning Preparedness:

1. Yearly trailer maintenance (Trailer maintenance checklist).
   a. Set a date or season for your trailer to be checked, every year. (My date is November, it’s my holiday treat to myself for after fires and before floods)
   b. Each month, review your trailer checklist to make sure everything is in working order.
   c. Remember, if something breaks fix it immediately.
2. Emergency Medical kit (human and horse)-keep in trailer (Emergency Kit checklist).
   a. Get a large storage bin and label it. This will be dedicated to emergency first aid needs for you and a horse. These are just basic supplies that may come in handy if there is an emergency that gives temporary relief while contacting
   b. Create two separate sections; 1 for human and 1 for horse. There are many things that can be used for both human and horse and that can be combined without separation. Make sure you clearly label everything. You can use freezer bags and sharpies for the items that can be shared between both horse and human. (Example: gauze rolls, sterile pads, band aides can be in one-gallon sized bag and labeled “sterile padding”). Tip, if you put tape over the sharpie writing, it won’t rub off over time. The more organized and clearly labeled items are, the easier it will be to find when you don’t have time to look.
   c. Perform a bi-yearly replace and re-pack on the kits. Many items won’t need to be replaced but you should go threw everything to make sure nothing has spilled; sterile items haven’t been compromised and bottles haven’t been left open.
      i. Repack what can still be used
      ii. Replace any oral medications or gels, even if they haven’t expired. These are exposed to heat and cold, so they need to be replaced regularly, even if they don’t expire.
3. Basic supply kit (Trailer Equipment)
a. Once you set this up, remember to clearly mark and categorize. Use a storage bin separate from the emergency bin.
b. Once set up, you should only check it once a year (good time is when you do your trailer maintenance). If you should need to use something, replace it immediately.

4. If you don’t own a trailer, you can still prepare in advance. You’ll want to have an easy grab bag. Find a bag that you can keep in a safe, easy access area (maybe your car so it’s there when you expectantly need it). This should include only items that you or your horse may need in an emergency. It should be light and easy to carry. This bag should also include:
   a. A small notebook and pens (at least 3, because we all know they run out of ink at the worst times)
   b. Camera
   c. Small supply of any special medications for your horse (these should be checked twice a year).
   d. A small laminated sign with 2 holes punched. This will have your information and emergency contact information on one side and your horse’s basic information on the other (name, general description, medical needs)

5. Ownership portfolio. (Portfolio Checklist) This is a standard binder that should have pertinent information about you, your horse and any emergency detail. It will make it easier for emergency intake and confirm your ownership of your beloved animal. If you have a trailer, keep it in the trailer. If you don’t, keep it next to your grab bag. Check it twice a year and update any pictures and vet records. Other things you may want to do with this data is: 1) create a remote data file that you can access from a computer or phone, and 2) create a smaller book to keep in your regular use car.

6. Digital Details:
   a. Agency contact card (including list of websites for updated emergency status)
   b. Emergency contact card

7. Training!!!!!!! Whether you own a trailer or not, find a trailer and find multiple people to handle your horse. Have play days where you have different types of trailers and different people to load and unload your horse. Hype yourselves up! Horses know the difference between the usual trip and an emergency. They will feel your energy. Get them used to being handled by different people and different trailers. Standard loading time during an emergency is about 5 minutes (give or take depending on the level of emergency). This sounds severe and upsets a lot of people. Unfortunately, there are a lot of horses that will need help and 1 horse that won’t load may cost the lives of others.
Find a friend (or two or three) Program

It takes us back to the days of field trips when you pick your friend and stay with them throughout the trip. Pick your friend(s) ahead of time and plan for helping each other during a disaster. They don’t all have to be horse people.

1. For neighbors with horses on their property, schedule a neighborhood meeting (try to meet quarterly or more). You can make it fun and a nice social event. (Neighborhood planning sheet)
   a. Create an emergency sheet for each person and give copies to the other others (these can go into your binder). Each person should have their own to share with the others.
   b. Take a tour of each other’s properties so you are familiar with where everything is, including emergency access to truck or trailer keys. Part of this tour should include the location of material in your trailer and your portfolio.
   c. Use the planning sheet to notate contacts, hidden key locations, hook up instructions, emergency evacuation routes and locations, order of contacts, meeting areas after evacuations.

2. Find two to three people that are not neighbors. Show them where your emergency gear is, how to hook up your trailer and give them a map of evacuation meeting points. If necessary, teach them how to drive your trailer.

3. If you keep your horse at a boarding facility, schedule a BBQ or ranch meeting to create an evacuation plan.
   a. If you have a trailer, identify the order of which horses you are offering to help trailer out.
   b. If you don’t have a trailer, pair up with someone who does have a trailer. Identify them in your portfolio so they are listed as one of your contacts.
   c. Get an emergency release. Acknowledge that you’ve authorized someone to handle your horse on your behalf.
   d. Make sure everyone has your contact information and an secondary emergency contact. (Tip: I’ve created one contact in my phone for “horse emergency contacts”. All my key contacts are listed together so I don’t have to sort through multiple names)
   e. Identify evacuation routes, meeting locations and evacuation site options.
   f. Try to get together at least once a quarter to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Things to remember about coordinating: try to plan with neighbors/friends that come from two different directions in case one direction is affected by the disaster.
II. Prepare

You should begin to prepare the moment you hear about any weather warnings. Don’t wait until the emergency comes to close.

Steps:

1. Reach out to assigned contacts and confirm availability. Give and get the current plans, work areas and availability details should there be an evacuation.
2. Make sure all the evacuation detail is correct and everyone has their copy handy
3. Make sure trailer and truck is where it can be accessed easily. If you can hook up ahead of time, do so.
4. ID your animals- put fetlock bands on, braid in dog tag, put ID collars on. You can keep these in all the time without affecting animal. Not a bad idea to Microchip.
5. Put animal name on Halter (you can do with Duct tape)
6. Make sure each animal has a halter and lead line easily available. Note: Putting halters on ahead of time may work for you but please make sure the animal will not get injured if caught up or there is burn potential.
7. Make sure you have easy access to government agency details regarding possible upcoming event. Program telephone #’s and websites into your phone.
8. Confirm meeting locations
9. Have two alternate access routes to evacuate from

Boarding facilities:

1. Follow steps above
2. Confirm evacuation plan with barn manager or owner
3. Confirm your emergency evacuation contact and make sure they are still willing to help evacuate your horse. Put your portfolio binder and grab bag in your car
III. Implement

The moment you hear about an impending disaster, it’s time to implement. You don’t need to evacuate immediately but you need to evaluate the conditions.

Fire:

Which way is the wind blowing?
Where did the fire start and how far from your property is it?
What is the landscape between you and the fire?
How many exit routes do you have?
How long will it be before someone can get there to evacuate?

Flooding:

How much rain is expected, including how many inches per hour
How high is your elevation?
Can you take your animals above flood risk on your property?
What is your exit strategy?
Define water level to determine when to pull animals out

Mudslide:

This is also tracked by rain potential?
If excessive rain is expected, immediately move animals away from possible slide locations?
How close are you to possible mudslide and what is risk of slide?
Time to evacuate.

Critical, critical, critical... *Don’t wait until it’s too late!* If you have a place to move your animals before immediate evacuation is necessary, do so. It will reduce the stress on the animal, reduce your stress, minimize possible accidents, minimize livestock loss and help keep the roads clear for emergency vehicles and other evacuation units.

If you need to evacuate:

1. Activate your emergency plan
2. Confirm availability of evacuation centers- use identified government resources
3. Contact your emergency planned contacts to make a plan
4. Only use your identified emergency contacts
5. Evacuate in order of your pre-identified priorities.
6. Do not call in excess people. This blocks roads and interfere's with government agency evacuation attempts. If there is additional help needed, reach out to agency to see what options there are and ask for help.
7. If someone picks up your horse, note:
   a. Location they are taking them to
   b. Persons Name, number, DL #, truck color and type, trailer description.
   c. Take a picture of vehicle before letting it leave with your animals
   d. Make sure they have your contact information and ask them to contact you the moment they get to evacuation site. Having an easy contact card to give them will make it easier.
   e. Allow government assigned, trained agencies to help evacuate before reaching out to strangers
   f. Go to evacuation site as soon as possible and check in.
   g. Find your animal and make sure he/she has stall hanger and has been accounted for at intake center
   h. Have an immediate back up plan in case you must move again.
8. Keep vehicles on side of road. Don’t block the road.
9. Turn vehicles in direction of exit
WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Every area has a different process and protocol for handling large animal emergencies. It can be frustrating when trying to coordinate with these agencies to ensure the community is working as a team and has a successful evacuation outcome.

The first step to working with the agencies starts during the planning process. Identify someone within your network that can reach out to the CHP, Animal Control and Fire department. Confirm their protocol when emergency evacuations become necessary. Often, the Department of Emergency Services leads disaster events.

- Plan community events to discuss Disaster Planning-invite the primary Animal Control Officer, a local fire department contact, and any other entity you feel may be helpful.
- Create contact card with direct telephone numbers for these people
- Confirm ahead of time what their protocol is.
  - Road closure process
  - Identification requirements for accessing property
  - Evacuation sites
  - When sites will be opened
  - Who directs opening the evacuation centers
- Make sure your team, as the individual animal owners, communicates that you are there to make it easier for them during necessary evacuations.
- Build and keep the relationship. Keep key contact list updated and make sure any new contacts are immediately introduced.
- Try to schedule bi-annual meetings or meetings prior to start of a possible disaster season.

During an evacuation, things get crazy quickly. If you have an established contact, send a quick text or put in a call. Advise them of your location and number of animals. Ask if there is anything you can assist with in your evacuation area.
Resources:

https://www.equestrisafe.com/

https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/downloads/is10_a-8.pdf


http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Animal-Evacuation/