

IT'S FIRE SEASON! WILDFIRE SAFETY

If you live or board your horse in an area prone to wildfires, now is the time to assure you are ready to evacuate if necessary.

Does your boarding facility have a fire plan?

Do they have a plan to deal with wildfires?

Check to make sure there is a well thought out plan for the facility and create a plan for your home. If the area is prone to wildfires, it is recommended you hold an annual evacuation drill. The drill should include quick and safe trailer loading, trailers closest to the exit should evacuate first and others follow in a calm, orderly manner. If your horses are loaded, assist others so everyone will be able to go. The drill should also include evacuating by foot. Traffic conditions may prevent you from driving out and to assure the safety of your animals, leading them out may be the only choice. This may be difficult during a drill, now imagine your animals are panicked from smoke, fire and traffic. Holding an annual drill will help you foresee problems and address issues that may arise before an actual emergency. Many people that keep horses at a boarding facility do not own a horse trailer. If you do not own a horse trailer, make arrangements with a barn buddy with additional trailer space to help you evacuate your horse.

If time allows move any machinery and vehicles away from structures before leaving.

If you can evacuate, where will you go?

Make arrangements before the emergency for stabling. Check with local farms, horse parks, fairgrounds, local humane societies or friend in a neighboring community. If you own a boarding facility, partner with another facility nearby to take the animals during an emergency. Know what their entry requirements and keep copies of the information in your truck, trailer or emergency preparedness kit.

What if the access to the facility is blocked by fire?

There may be times that the roads will be closed due to fire. If you are at work or away from your horses, do not rush back to the facility without checking the status of the roads. If one entrance is blocked, is there an alternate route? Keep in mind that immediately rushing into an area that has been closed will further delay the efforts of fire fighters and other rescue personnel by causing unnecessary traffic congestion.

If the area is blocked, can trained rescue personnel get in to the facility? Many areas have established large animal evacuation teams that are trained to enter restricted areas. Check now with your local animal control services or sheriff's departments to see if one exists in your area. Get involved with your local group and support them with donations or your time. Our local group is trained in evacuation procedures, animal and human first

aid and works closely with all agencies to assure the safety of both the rescuer and evacuees. Many of these groups have a registry system that helps to make the evacuation easier, especially when you are in an area with unmarked or poorly marked roads and driveways.

Evacuation is not an option.

In the event evacuation is no longer an option, the last resort may be to set the animals free. Whenever possible, the animals should be marked with a livestock marker or other form of identification. Remember to keep photos, brand, tattoo, microchip and registration information in a safe and accessible place. You will need this information to prove ownership if your animals have been found or evacuated by someone else.

Quick tips for Fire- Proofing your Facility

1. **Fire Extinguishers** should be visible and placed in all buildings. Check them twice a year for pressure. These should be A-B-C type extinguishers that work on wood or paper, combustible gasses or liquids and electrical fires.
2. **Sprinkler Systems** should be included in all new barn construction and whenever possible added to existing facilities.
3. **Fire Retardant Materials.** When remodeling or building a new farm structure use materials that are fire retardant
4. **Hay Storage** should be in a separate building from animal housing whenever possible and whenever possible 30 feet from other structures.
5. **Hydrants** should be placed on rural properties so firefighters may connect into existing water sources.
6. **Check all Wiring Annually** at a minimum. Check all appliances and exposed wiring to assure there is no damage from age or rodents. Clean out cobwebs and dust around all electrical sources.
7. **Non-Nylon Halters** should be used in fire evacuations. If you are in a fire prone area, halters should be leather and keep an ID tag attached to the halter with your name and phone number.
8. **Defensible Space** of 100 feet around your home and barn will lessen the impact of a fire. Keep 30 feet from the structures “Lean, Clean and Green” by removing all flammable vegetation. The remaining 70 feet should be a “Reduced Fuel Zone” by removing lower tree branches, landscape with fire resistant plants and maintain plants with regular watering.
9. **Maintain an emergency water supply on your property.**
10. **Access** - Clearly post address at the street and make sure driveways are wide enough for fire equipment to approach and there is a place for large vehicles to turn around.
11. **Clear flammable vegetation at least 10 feet from roads and 5 feet from driveways.**
12. **Operate equipment in the early morning.** Lawnmowers and other equipment used to clear vegetation may spark and cause a fire. Keep a fire extinguisher on your machinery.

13. Do not store machinery and combustibles in the barn.

14. Keep your truck and trailer ready to go. Maintain your truck and trailer in good working order, check tire pressure and floor boards, always have a full tank of gas, keep a well stocked preparedness kit with first aid supplies in your trailer. Whenever possible park the vehicles so they facing the road.

More detailed information can be found on the CAL Fire website here is a link to the Homeowners Checklist from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.
http://www.fire.ca.gov/about_content/downloads/CDFchecklist2006.pdf

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