

Emergency and Evacuation Planning and Practice

Back Country Horsemen of America
Gila Chapter
Silver City, New Mexico
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You Are the Most Important Person Here



Your safety comes first and it is your first priority. You cannot help your family or your livestock if you are injured or unprepared. Make your evacuation plans before an emergency occurs.

If you get word that your area is being evacuated, start the move-out process immediately with your plan in mind and hand. Emergencies in general—and wildfires in particular—are unpredictable and can spread rapidly. As soon as you hear of a mandatory evacuation, begin to implement your plan; loading your animals and organizing the associated necessities ***will take longer than you expect.***

What's In It For You?

You are a horseman or a horsewoman. You rely on and have a significant investment in your equids. They rely on you to keep them safe and your daily routine does that well.

Consider that your daily routine can fall apart in emergencies. When you need to evacuate your animals to a safe location, the road you normally use to move to and from your barn or pasture might be blocked by a fire or closed by the authorities. The usually dry creek crossing between you and the gate might be flooded or blocked by boulders and storm debris. What then?



When you scramble to gather up all the feed, medical supplies, water, and tack for your horse so you can move him away from danger, wouldn't it be nice to have his go bag stocked, accessible, and ready to go RIGHT NOW?

If you're out of town when an emergency occurs, who will see to your mare and her companion donkey? How will you discover that a situation exists that requires evacuation? How will you know if your animals are safe? Does anybody else know how to hook up your trailer and drive your rig? Where will they find the keys? Do they know where you are and how to contact you?

What's the best way to transport your equines to safety given the emergency conditions you're confronting? Is your trailer in operating condition? Can you load the animals quickly? If your customary vehicle route isn't accessible, how can you move them? Where do you take them?

The Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico's Gila Region have put together this guide to help you work out the answers to these and other questions about equine evacuation in a way that works best for you.

To that end, read on for the features of the guide that make it adaptable and easy to use.

This Document is Easy to Use

Here's how to get to the information you need without reading through a bunch of stuff you don't care about. It's not necessary, nor even advisable, to read the entire guide cover-to-cover.

First, note that this guide contains clickable links, which are formatted in red capital letters. If you read the guide on-line, you can click on any item in the table of contents and go directly to the associated topic.

Second, an emergency might offer more than one method for addressing an emergency in which evacuation is but one approach. A section titled

Strategies describes several such methods. An evacuation approach you have in mind might not always work, so it's helpful to consider alternatives just in case.

Third, consider the kind of emergency you would most likely face that could require evacuation of your animals. We in the fire-scorched Gila region are concerned about wildfires and the flood probabilities they engender, so this guide deals specifically with those hazards. Other hazards also exist, of course, from weather, construction accidents, and the acts of deranged people. If you are concerned about these, we suggest you adapt the information in this guide accordingly.

We want to draw your attention to perhaps the most useful feature of this guide: the section that contains a series of

Checklists that we have set up for you. They contain items you're certain to need, along with space to add items you need that we didn't think of. The ideas behind the checklists are these.

- They will spark your thinking and help you plan for contingencies you might not yet have considered.
- You can print the lists you need whenever you need them.
- If you have the ability to edit this Microsoft Word document, you can make your additions permanent and remove items you don't need.
- You can access the checklists directly and quickly through this guide by clicking on the ones you want as listed in the table of contents.
- You can work with this guide without having an Internet connection.

So what's in it for you? An emergency planned and prepared for isn't an emergency! Let's get on with it, this scary matter of preparing for evacuation.

Strategies



The Gila region's Back Country Horsemen identified four strategies for dealing with emergencies such as evacuation, for which special efforts must be made to ensure the safety of your equines. Others we have not listed might occur to you, but our strategies are the following:

- Trailer to a safe haven
- Walk in hand to a safe location
- Remove halters, open gate, turn the animals loose
- Shelter in place

Any one of these might be appropriate for your situation and the specific conditions you face. We note here the relative pros and cons for each one.

Trailer to a safe haven

If you have a horse or stock trailer, you might be able to use it to move your animals out of danger. For this strategy to work best, the following conditions must exist:

- Can you catch your equines? If they are in a panicked state or happen to respond to your own anxiety, you might not be able to corral them, which you must of course be able to do before you can load them.
- Animals must load readily. An emergency is an unseemly time to discover they resist getting on board.
- Trailer must be in full operating condition. Checked the tires lately?
- Trailer must be connected to your tow vehicle. This can be a time-consuming and aggravating task under the best of circumstances. Can you get it done in a hurry? Can you leave it hooked up in your absence so someone not so familiar with it as you are can drive it away without having to deal with that?
- Can your trailer and/or tow vehicle carry the feed and supplies your animals will need? Can you load these items yourself?
- A capable someone must be available to drive. The driver can't afford to be intimidated by inexperience or propelled to rash behavior by high emotions.
- The road out must be open. If fire, flood-borne boulders, high water, or emergency vehicles block the path, getting out might be troublesome.
- The trailer must be supplied with feed, water, and other supplies the equines will need for the expected duration of the evacuation.
- What is your destination? How do you know it's safe?

Walk in hand to a safe location

When trailering isn't feasible, perhaps you can lead your animals to safety. Consider the following points:

- Do your horses have physical limitations that prevent their walking to safety?
- Can you get to their halters and lead lines easily?
- Is the path to safety free from locked gates and hazards you cannot cross or which your animals refuse to cross?
- Do you have enough time to get where you're going?
- Are you wearing shoes and clothing in which you can make the trip without further ruining your day?
- How many animals do you have? Can you lead more than one at a time?
- Where are you taking them? Is the destination close enough so that you can get there, even after dark?
- Do you have an alternate route planned in case your first choice doesn't pan out?

Remove halters, open gate, turn animals loose

Although nobody is particularly fond of this strategy, sometimes the best approach might be to let the equines fend for themselves. If so, pay attention to matters such as these:



- If you turn the livestock loose, could fences or some other barrier trap them?
- Remove their halters, blankets, and any tack they're wearing before you release them. We all know how horses get stuck on things. Tack puts them at further disadvantage.
- Are the equines marked with something that identifies them as belonging to you? Can somebody who finds them tell whom to call?
- How will you recover your animals after the danger has passed?



Shelter in place

Sometimes evacuation isn't the best approach. Egress might be impeded. The trailer or tow vehicle might be broken down. Protecting your property might make staying put the best option. Instructions from emergency officials might order you to shelter in place.

This approach has its own special challenges and they depend on the kind of hazard you face.

- Do you have a reliable source of water, and a reliable source of power to pump it so you can keep your roof(s) wet when a wildfire approaches?
- Do you have a system to spray water on the roof(s) so you don't have to stay up there?
- Can you keep your animals calm enough so they don't erupt into frenzy and cause a whole new set of problems?
- Can you pump water away from your structures if necessary?
- If you are sheltered in place for several days, do you have enough food and water on hand for your family and your animals?
- Do you have an alternative power source for refrigeration?

Sheltering in place requires a few tactics that can make the strategy work best:

- Unlock and open barn doors and gates so your animals can escape if they need to.
- Set up a system to keep the roofs on your dwelling, barns, and sheds wet.
- Keep an adequate supply of food, water, and medications on hand for both people and animals.
 - "Adequate" is something you'll have to decide for yourself, based on the estimated length of the emergency and your own needs.
 - Are perishables stored and accessible during a power failure?
 - Are the stores located in a safe place?
- If the power goes out, will you be able to handle your sanitation needs?
- Defensible space (fire hazards) within 30 feet of locations for animals and humans:
 - Trim dead branches from trees
 - Remove dead trees
 - Keep grasses mowed
- Know what emergency resources are available and how to (if you'll be able to) access them. Consider the ability to provide help from:
 - Government
 - Neighbors
 - Schools
 - Churches
 - Commercial establishments

Be Realistic

If you decide to shelter-in-place during an evacuation order, keep your expectations realistic. An evacuation is ordered when the authorities believe it is the best way for them to help keep citizens safe. Their personnel and equipment resources can be spread thin during an emergency. Should the hazard threaten your life and property, the help you're counting on might not arrive. If you can evacuate faster than emergency personnel can respond, by all means do so.

Hazards to plan for

Wildfire

Heat. Eerie orange light. Smoke. Difficulty breathing. Reduced visibility. Emotional and physical trauma. Loss of life and property. The aftermath once the flames have been extinguished. How much worse can an emergency be?

If you don't want to find out, consider the perspectives related in this section.



Lomita Fire, Hwy. 180 Bypass, May 2011

There's good news about wildfire. It rarely comes as a surprise. In the Gila region, we worry about it from late winter through early summer. We keep an eye on the mountain slopes, looking for wisps of smoke during dry lightning storms. Windy days make us nervous. We keep an ear to weather and news reports that tell of potential danger and the hazards represented by wildfires in progress.

If a wildfire threatens your home and livestock, you will probably have plenty of warning and you'll be able to execute an evacuation strategy in an orderly and calm manner.

The operative word is "strategy." Do you have one? Have you ever tested it? Can it handle the contingencies you will face when the sheriff comes knock-knock-knocking at your front door with a mandatory evacuation order?

Here are some questions to answer as you develop or refine your evacuation strategy for wildfire:

- Given the prevailing winds in your area, from what direction is fire most likely to come?
- If your strategy involves sheltering-in-place, does operating your water-delivery system require power from the electric grid? If so, do you have a back-up system?
- Does a firebreak, a.k.a. defensible space, exist around your home and outbuildings?
- Who will act to protect your livestock and property if you aren't around?
- What flammable materials are present on your property that could ignite or intensify a fire? Are they stored safely?
- How will you account for all your livestock and loved ones to make certain everybody is evacuated?

- Do you have more than one method to communicate with others who need to know you're evacuating?
- Is your property readily accessible to firefighters and others who can assist you?
- Which evacuation strategy is likely to work best for you and under what conditions?
- How will you cope if your property is uninhabitable for you and your animals when the immediate fire danger has passed?

Flooding



2013 flooding in Mogollon

The threat we face here is flash flooding. Storms over your watershed can fill the normally dry arroyos quickly, even if you don't get any rain on your property. Flooding can dump plenty of debris on your beaten path—or wash out the roads you normally use, or contaminate your water supply.

Flooding in the Gila region poses similar challenges to those of wildfire, but has its own flavor, especially for those whose property abuts or whose access roads cross arroyos and the watercourses we laughingly call rivers out here. Your house and barns might be built on high ground and you consider yourself thereby safe from an upstream deluge, but consider these items:

- High water and flood debris can block your ability to reach safety (and groceries). It can also prevent emergency responders from reaching you.
- A flood can knock out your electricity and water supply—and can do so for an extended period of time. Without these amenities, you are reduced to third-world living and worse.
- A flood can turn your property to mud and damage your buildings and their contents.
- People sometimes die when they attempt to cross flooded arroyos, whether they are in a vehicle or not.
- Floods—like any emergency—put the lives of emergency responders at risk.
- The aftermath of a flood is smelly, dirty, and hazardous. You can't tell and probably don't want to discover the nature of debris outside your barn door (or inside it, for that matter).
- What flood hazards do you face?
 - Is your property located below a heap of mine tailings or a talus slope that can cut loose and slide onto your house and outbuildings?

- Does your road cross arroyos that will be impassible during high water or if filled with debris when the water recedes?
- Could a nearby arroyo flood your house or barn, even if it has never done so before?
- Do you live below the burn scar from a recent wildfire?
- How can you keep the water out of places it shouldn't be? What will you do if it gets in anyway?
- If necessary, can you move tack, hay, furniture, books, appliances, and personal effects to a location beyond the reach of potential floodwaters?
- Do you have a plan to clean up the mess when the water goes down and mud remains?

Wind

Another hazard we face around here is wind, especially in the spring when it blows hard for an endless couple of months. Wind doesn't often require evacuation, but when it does, it's



Wind damage, County Fairgrounds, 2012

because it accompanies fire, power failure, or extensive property damage. Many of the evacuation admonishments listed above apply to blustery weather. In addition, wind presents the hazards of structure damage or collapse, which themselves can necessitate evacuation. Even if wind doesn't blow you off your property, dust and dehydration can make life uncomfortable for you and your equines. Keep in mind these points:

- A dust devil is a tornado in miniature. One can frighten the horses into damaging property. A dust devil can relieve a building of its roof should the whirlwind hit just so. Do your buildings or fences have structural issues that you need to address?
- Dust storms can make complicate the simple act of breathing. If you or your horses have respiratory issues, you might need to put on a mask. That's an easy thing for you to do for yourself, but your horses might not understand or appreciate the effort. Have you given them a chance to experience having a shirt tied over their heads to protect their eyes and noses?
- What about that ancient, just-barely-alive cottonwood tree down by the stream crossing? If it blows down in a windstorm and blocks your route, what then? Are your chain saw and muscle power large enough to handle it? If it

isn't on your property, do you need permission from the landowner to deal with it?

- Will blowing and settling dust compromise the quality of food and water for your horses?
- Do you have a structurally sound shelter the animals can use to take refuge from the wind?

Getting Out, Getting In

Everybody knows that evacuation implies getting you and your horses away from your house, boarding facility, campground, or wherever you happen to be when danger threatens. That's plain as the nose on your horse's face.



Hwy 15, near Gila Cliff Dwellings, 2013

Have you also considered the need to get in?

If the authorities issue an evacuation order while you're not at home—at the supermarket, for example—will you be able to get back home to evacuate your personal belongings and your horses, and then get out again?

- There's not a whole lot you can do on the spot to get in if the area has been sealed off, but you might be able to call for help from people who are still inside the perimeter—especially if you have an evacuation plan that includes them.
- Neighbors and emergency personnel can help you more easily if gates on ingress and egress routes are unlocked and open.
- Do your helpers know where your halters and lead lines are? Can you leave that equipment hanging on a prominent gate?
- If you are allowed into the perimeter, you might not be able to get home by way of your normal route. Do you have an alternative in mind? Is it passable

for your tow vehicle and trailer? Ruts, boulders, tree limbs, brush, trash, mining debris can stop you in a hurry, or at least slow you down.

- If your alternate route crosses somebody else's property, can get through any locked or infrequently used gates that might block your path?
- After you evacuate, can you leave your gates unlocked and open so that emergency personnel or anybody else who needs to get through can do so without cutting your fences?
- If you shelter-in-place, what about your pets, dogs in particular? Are they secured so they cannot interfere with or be harmed by emergency operations that occur on or near your property?

Transport Considerations

Ya gotta leave in a hurry. In addition to those valuable family photographs, you want to take along your toothbrush and—wait! The horses!

You can facilitate much of the job of evacuating horses with some advance preparation. Perhaps the most important matter is to practice loading your equines frequently so they always go in quickly and quietly. In addition:

- Store copies of their transport papers in the trailer, which is where you need to have them even if you're not facing an evacuation.
- Maintain your trailer and tow vehicle in ready condition. That rusty hulk out behind the barn won't help you at all if its tires are rotted and flat. Keep an eye on:
 - Tire pressure
 - Tire tread
 - Water and battery
- Leave your gates unlocked and open when you leave, especially that automatic one that closes itself behind you.
- Know where you're going.
 - How far away is it?
 - How much time do you need to get there?
 - What's the safest route?
 - What alternate route can you use if the primary one isn't available?

Boarded Animals

Some of us board our equines at a facility off-site from our homes. If the area where you board is within a danger zone, you need to have certain special information:

- Request a copy of the facility's emergency protocols, then read and understand them.
- Ask the facility to notify you about emergencies

- Be aware of any responsibilities the facility requires from you in the event of evacuation.
- Make sure you can access the facility if you need to:
 - Will you be considered a trespasser?
 - Will the facility be cordoned off?
 - Can you get your rig close enough to load your animals?

Emergency Staging Areas and Safe Havens

It's often tricky to pin down the location where you can take your animals during an evacuation. Official shelters don't always apply—the rodeo grounds where everybody went last time might itself be in the danger zone this time. If you can get reliable information about emergency shelters, that's good, but don't count on it.



The BCH Gila Chapter has compiled a list of staging areas in Grant County to which equines can be transported. A given staging area might be a final destination, but it is primarily a place where horse owners can get information about the emergency, instructions from emergency officials, and connect with non-evacuating horse owners who can provide temporary shelter.

You can help others by offering your property as a safe haven. Advise the authorities and your horse-owning acquaintances that you're able to take in refugees. However, to protect you from being overloaded . . .

- Specify the number of animals you can accept.
- Make sure you have enough water and feed available for all the animals you can accept.
- Notify the authorities when you reach the limit of animals you can accommodate.

Once you arrive at a staging area, expect the situation to be chaotic. An Incident Command system, which you might find operating at official shelters, helps reduce the confusion:

- Educate yourself about the Incident Command System. Visit <http://www.fema.gov/incident-command-system>
- Find out if Incident command is in place at the staging area.
- Find out where the command is set up.
- Find out who's in charge and report directly with that individual for instructions.

- If Incident Command isn't operating, be prepared to assume command and maintain command until somebody of higher rank can replace you

In addition, you need to get these facts about the safe haven:

- Where should you put your animals?
- Is a veterinarian on site?
- If your horse is injured, is there a triage location to which you should report?

Planning



When you have a plan and when you have established the resources it requires, removing yourself and your equines from danger is reduced from a panicky predicament to an important job that can be completed with relative calm and control. Make things easy on yourself. Think about these things now.

Plan for Back-up

Among the most essential parts of an evacuation plan is enlisting outside assistance if at all possible. You can't guarantee that you'll be on the scene when an emergency arises. If you're not there to execute your plan, how will it get done? If you have suffered an illness or injury that prevents your full participation in an evacuation, do you have somebody lined up to step in for you? Your family, friends, and neighbors are valuable resources, but they all need to understand your plan so they can help you. You can also help them best if you have information about their plans.

It's a good idea to enlist the aid of multiple people so you have back-up assistance in case your first line of defense falls through. Even if you share your plan with your neighbors, they might be occupied in conducting their own evacuations if, for example, your entire neighborhood is threatened by the same fire. If your kids are at school, they might not be able to get home in time to help you. If nobody's home at all when an evacuation order goes out, it helps to have someone on call who is located elsewhere, someone who can get to your place, and get into your place, to move things along in your absence.

Assign Responsibilities

If you have family members on site, make sure everybody has received—and understands—a set of specified responsibilities. Somebody needs to be in charge and that person must have the ability and authority to make decisions. In families especially, everybody must understand who's in charge and be willing to take orders from that person.

Assign responsibility for preparation to those who can handle it. Somebody needs to gather and load supplies, which requires knowing where the supplies are and the muscle power to retrieve and load them. The task can be distributed to more than

one person if you have enough kids—one can move supplies from storage to a central pile. Another can check the supplies off the list as someone else loads them. Somebody else can report to the person in charge that the job is complete and the supplies are ready to go.

Finally, somebody who knows how to do it needs to load the animals. Assign that job to somebody who has actually done it before and who can do it without communicating anxiety to the horses.

Check Lists

The plan you develop needs to provide for the short-term and longer-term needs of your horses. An evacuation can last for several days, during which their feed, medical, bedding, and tack needs must be addressed. Checklists are valuable for making sure you have everything you need. To help you get started, we have provided a few at the end of this guide. You can tailor these lists to your own requirements.

Once you prepare your checklists, post them in strategic locations. Make sure everybody knows where the lists are, what they are for, how to use them, and who is responsible for each item they list.

Review the lists periodically to ensure that they are complete for your current circumstances and that they don't address items you no longer need.

Evacuation-Ready Supplies

If you can compile evacuation supplies and equipment in advance, so they are ready to be loaded from a single place, so much the better—especially if all the participants know where that location is. Trunks or tote boxes that are always filled with the expected necessities make the job easy—so long as nobody has raided them and failed to put the stuff back. If you use this approach, be sure that everybody knows these supplies are off limits for routine activities.



Perishable feeds and medical supplies with expiration dates are not good candidates for this approach, as the supplies might reside in storage for extended periods.

Location of Emergency Supplies



If you can arrange it, keep in a single place all the supplies and equipment you expect to need for an evacuation. This could be in your horse trailer or its tow vehicle, in a secure and dry location in your barn, or in your house or garage in a space that provides ready and easy ingress and egress.

Don't let the supplies get buried behind unused furniture, rusty bicycles, defunct appliances, tools, or any of the other dross that collects in storage spaces. Keep them handy!

Anybody who is part of your evacuation plan needs to know where this location is, and needs to have access to it—the keys to a locked storage room, for example.

Destinations

Sometimes emergency officials declare destinations where your animals can be housed for the duration, but don't count on it. Even if such a location is specified, it's a challenge to get the word to everybody who needs it. Make sure you and your helpers have two or more specified destinations in mind. Also make sure they know how to get to each one. Ask them to let you know where they ended up and when they arrive.

Emergency Communication Channels

The Gila BCH Chapter has set up a communication tree for its members. If you don't know how this system works, ask somebody about it when you come to a meeting. Make sure your contact information is included in the database. The tree channels emergency information out to each member—even those who live in the area outside the evacuation order who can help out those who are evacuating.

Along with radio and TV broadcasts, phone calls, text messages, or emails from neighbors, another channel for emergency information is a government-sponsored community notification system (a.k.a., "reverse 911"), which automatically sends text messages to enrolled residents about emergencies. Any resident of Silver City and Grant County can sign up for the service by enrolling at this web site

<https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/F1EB82DDB71C>¹ You need to enroll all the telephones at your disposal—both your landline and cell phones.

While you're at it, find out how emergency information is distributed. All localities are not technologically equal. Some of us can't receive a cellular signal, while others don't have landline or Internet service. Ask around so you know who provides the "official" emergency information—the Forest Service? Fire and emergency medical officials? Local or state police? An informed neighbor?

You also want to know HOW the information is provided. Can you expect to receive it by radio, TV, reverse 911, email, text message, telephone, hollered over the back fence?

Then, once you know where the information is coming from, learn how to ensure its accuracy. A gossipy neighbor or hysterical child might not have all the facts. Consider the source and check your assumptions. Verify the information with a trusted source if you're in doubt.

Information can come to you from means other than people and technology. To assess the threat of wildfire, for example, look around for smoke. If you see it, consider the direction and speed of the wind. Even if you don't see smoke, if you hear sirens, helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, or the big engines on fire trucks, assess whether the sounds are approaching or retreating and take action accordingly.

Boarded Animals

Some of us board our equines at a location remote from our homes. An evacuation order might not affect your residence; instead, it might cover the facility where your horses live. Often the responsibility for evacuation rests with the facility managers, so you need to know what their plan is—if they have one at all. Ask the people in charge what their responsibilities are for your animals, and ask about your responsibilities as well. If you're not satisfied with the response, you need to develop a plan of your own and make sure you'll be able to execute it.

During a recent fire in Silver City, the roads to a boarding facility were blocked off to everyone except those who lived in the area. Horse owners not already on site at the facility were prohibited from going after their animals. Keep that in mind when you consider the ability of your facility managers to cope with an evacuation order.

Write It Down

When the evacuation order comes and you have to bug out, you might have your plan clearly in mind and you might know exactly what's supposed to happen to execute it.

¹This link was valid at the time this guide was published. If it doesn't work for you, check the Grant County and/or Silver City NM web sites—or crack open your phone book and call the civic authorities for more information.

In times of stress, however, the other participants in your plan can't read your mind. Write your plan down and give it to everybody from whom you expect help.

The written plan is a set of instructions that should include:

- Your contact information
 - Cell phone numbers
 - Landline numbers
 - Email address
- Contact information for neighbors and friends
- Map of your property, specifically identifying the locations of
 - Trailer and tow vehicle, with keys
 - Evacuation supplies and keys
 - Checklists
 - Extra copies of the evacuation plan
- Responsibilities and to whom assigned
- Default destinations and instructions for getting there

Give copies of the plan to everybody whom you expect to be involved in executing it and try to make sure they read it and understand how it works.

Even if neighbors aren't part of your plan, make sure they have your contact information at the very least. It doesn't hurt to give them the written plan as well.

We have provided a sample evacuation plan at the end of this guide to get you started.

Communication and Coordination

When you receive an evacuation order, you become part of an event for which communication and coordination are difficult—and essential. You face several challenges. You need to be confident that the information you receive—and share with others—is accurate and not based on rumor or a misinterpretation of the facts.

If your situation presents special needs, such as the rescue of one of your horses from a flooded arroyo, you need to give correct and precise information to the people who can help you, and you need to be sure they understand you.

You face extra challenges if you are unable to take charge of evacuating your own animals. If you're out of town, for example, you need to establish a system by which neighbors or friends can evacuate for you. Your helpers need to know what your plan is.



Since emergencies are always chaotic, it's not necessarily a valid assumption that everybody who needs to evacuate will get the message. It's a good idea to have a method by which neighbors communicate with each other when an evacuation order is given.

Communicating with Friends and Neighbors

Substitute Evacuators. Arrange with someone who can move your animals out in your absence. Then make it easy for them to do so. Do your neighbors know how to hook up your trailer? Do they know where the keys are? If you expect others to trailer your horses, is a tow vehicle available in your absence?

- If you can do so, keep your trailer hooked up to the tow vehicle so it's ready to go at once. Tell your helpers where the rig is parked and make sure they know what they have to do to drive it away.
- If you're driving your tow vehicle so that it's not available for your substitute evacuators, you need a back-up plan that your friends and neighbors can implement.
- Make sure your helpers know where the keys are—and make sure the keys are where they're supposed to be. You need to provide keys for everything that locks on your rig—the tow vehicle, all locking doors on the trailer, and any locking trunks or cabinets within.

Mutual Notification. Make an agreement with your neighbors that you will notify them if you are evacuating—and that they should notify you as well. This exchange of information helps everybody keep an eye on the situation as it develops. Neighbors who don't evacuate might be willing to watch your property and keep you apprised of any developments. You, on the other hand, can inform anybody who's staying behind or who hasn't left yet about the situation down the road.

Crisis Clearinghouse. During an emergency, information is skewed, misinterpreted, overlooked, erroneously reported—count on that fact of chaos and take steps to circumvent the confusion. Arrange with others who are not directly involved in the emergency to collect, verify, and report new information—to serve as a clearinghouse for evacuees. If you're evacuating, you'll be too busy to handle this task yourself, and so will emergency personnel (dispatchers, firemen, EMTs). Make sure others who are subject to the evacuation have the clearinghouse contact information.

Special Needs

In Grant County, NM, a team from the Piños Altos Fire Department carries out large animal rescue. Their efforts are coordinated through the Grant County/Silver City 911 dispatch. If you need large animal rescue, dial 911 and be prepared to give the dispatcher information such as:

- Number and type of animals (horses, cattle, llamas, elephants)
- Environment from which they need to be rescued (flooded arroyo, collapsed structure)
- Location of animal(s) (GPS coordinates, street address)
- Condition of animal(s) (injured, pregnant, stranded, calm, frightened)
- Hazards to rescuers (swift water, fire, collapsing structures)

Identify Your Horses

Evacuation activity can generate surprises. Certainly owners for whom turning the horses loose is a valid strategy need to mark their animals in some conspicuous way, but unexpected events can result in loose horses even for those who lead or trailer their equines out. Here are some identification methods that might work for your particular situation.

Microchip. A microchip is a permanent identification tool, injected into a horse's neck by way of a surprisingly slender catheter. Once a chip is on board, it will always be there. At least one large animal vet in the Silver City area installs microchips in horses and takes care of the registration as well. The price is insanely cheap—just \$5 for the whole works (as of November 2013).

Microchips are not without their detractions, however.

- They can fail. If your horse has one, you need to have it scanned periodically to make sure it's still working.
- A microchip can't be read without a scanner. Veterinarians have these scanners, but pretty much nobody else does. If you want just any old body to know to whom a horse belongs, supplement a microchip with some other means of identification.
- You can't see a microchip from a distance—or even close up, for that matter—so a chip isn't necessarily the best way to mark your horses if you want them to be identified easily. There's really no way to tell if a horse has a microchip except by scanning for it.

Tags and Straps. A couple of options exist for marking your horse with a tag or strap.

- Order a dog tag that bears your phone number and any other information you can fit onto the metal plate. Attach the tag to a line that you braid into the horse's mane. Here's a dog tag supplier that offers good prices and great service: <http://www.dogtagsonline.com/>
- Attach a tag to the halter. Consider, however, that if the halter comes off, so does the tag.
- Use a permanent marker to write your telephone number on a Velcro leg or neck strap (like the ones at



<http://www.bocksid.com/>). Then put the strap on the horse's fetlock or around his neck and away you go.

Paint. You can spray paint your telephone number onto your horse's sides. Presumably the hissing sound the paint makes as it comes out of the can won't cause a spook, but it might be wise to experiment before a secondary crisis erupts during an evacuation.

Training

We can pretend we're not horse trainers, but we all know it's not true. Sometimes it seems like horses suffer from dementia. Like it is for the crazy aunt in your attic, most every situation is new for a horse, even if he's done a given something dozens of times. Fortunately, horses take pretty well to a couple of key evacuation activities, but you'll want to practice them periodically before your evacuation-induced adrenaline rush takes away your sanity—and theirs.

You'll also want to train yourself and your helpers in evacuation activities. Practice makes . . . well, you know.

Practice with the Horses

Trailer



How easily do your equines load into a trailer? Do they consistently hop right on and stand quietly while you secure the doors? How well do they travel? Do they bicker and fuss with one another while you're on the road?

Your horses must load willingly and ride quietly if you need to evacuate. Even if they load well under normal conditions, they can key into yours or their own anxiety about the situation and become resistant to loading. If your horses don't get out much, be sure to practice loading them periodically during the calm times before an evacuation order comes calling.

Blindfolding

Like a towel in Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a blindfold is a massively useful thing for a horse owner. Sometimes horses respond to danger like the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal, which assumes that if you can't see it, it can't see you. If you can blindfold a horse, the horse might assume that because it can't see the danger, the danger can't see it. A calm and trusting horse results.

Here are some tips for blindfolding a horse. Practice this now and then so both you and the horse know what to expect.

- Make a blindfold from an adult-sized long-sleeved shirt. The body of the shirt drapes over the horse's face and the sleeves tie behind its ears.
- Lead the horse around while it's blindfolded.
- You can also make a blindfold out of an ordinary fly mask. This is a useful approach because most horses have worn a fly mask, so it feels familiar. Attach (sew it on or use self-adhesive Velcro) a soft fabric panel to the outside of the mask over the eyes. Put the mask on and lead the horse with the mask in place.

Practice with People

After you draw up your evacuation plan, practice it with everybody whom you expect to be involved—your family members, friends, and neighbors.

- Drill your kids on their roles to make sure they understand them and are capable of carrying out their responsibilities.
- Check evacuation supplies from time to time to make sure all supplies prepared and stowed in advance are where they're supposed to be and are in workable condition.
- Have anybody who's assigned to drive practice hooking up the trailer and running down the road with it.

Checklists

Supplies and Equipment

- Evacuation supplies are stored at the ready in a known location
- Supplies checked for condition and completeness on (date: _____)
- Lead ropes
- Blankets
- Halters (leather—not nylon, which gets hot if close to fire)
- 50' cotton rope
- ID tags
- Travel papers and contact info of your veterinarian
- Shirts for blindfolds
- Spray paint (to identify animal)
- Medical kits with instructions (e.g., medication dosages/frequency)
- Medications
- Camping gear (including flashlights and extra bags, duct tape)
- Fire extinguisher
- Water supply
- Feed (3 days, with instructions)
- Hay
- Buckets
- Feed tubs
- Feed bags
- Fly spray and mask
- Change of clothing
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Ingress/egress

- Gates unlocked and open
- Pets secured
- Access route free from obstacles
- Alternate route planned
- Halters and lead ropes hanging from gates
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Transport

- Transport papers in trailer or tow vehicle
- Tire pressure on trailer
- Tire pressure on tow vehicle
- Tire tread
- Water and electric systems
- Gates unlocked
- Destination known
- Destination distance _____
- Directions to destination (primary route) _____
- Directions to destination (alternate route) _____
- Route to destination is safe

Information for boarded or off-site animals

- Facility protocols in hand and understood
- Emergency notification requested
- Facility emergency contact (telephone #) _____
- Facility responsibilities _____
- Owner responsibilities _____
- Owner access property
- Owner can get vehicle close
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Additional Resources

Fire Halters – an easy safety measure for your barn

<http://blog.sstack.com/fire-halters-an-easy-safety-measure-for-your-barn/-sthash.ZWlyITE3.dpuf>

How to Set Up a Call Tree

<http://www.theworksite.org/index.php/organizing-nuts-and-bolts/115-phone-trees>

Evacuation Tips

http://www.rmiiia.org/catastrophes_and_statistics/evacuation_plan.asp

http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/wildfire/

<http://www.readyforwildfire.org/>

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/preparedness>

Silver City/Grant County Reverse 911

<https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/F1EB82DDB71C>

Checklists

http://www.texasprepares.org/campaign/Stay-or-Go_Checklist.htm

<http://createthegood.org/toolkit/operation-emergency-prepare/evacuation-plan-checklists>

Emergency Preparedness

<http://www.nmdhsem.org/>

<http://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/nmhs/emergency-recommendation.html>

<http://nmhealth.org/hem/documents/Family-Emergency-Preparedness-Guide.pdf>

Incident Command System

<http://www.fema.gov/incident-command-system>

BCH Gila Chapter
Emergency and Evacuation Planning and Practice
Winter 2014

Animal Identification

<http://www.dogtagsonline.com/>

<http://www.bocksid.com/>

Large Animal Evacuation and Rescue

http://www.whmentors.org/evac/trailer_3-01.html

<http://tlaer.org/>

Grant County Regional Dispatch Authority, **575-388-8840**