

Fire & Storm-Ready Checklists for Evacuation & Shelter-in-Place Prep

Your Animal Emergency Action Plan (EAP) should include a WEATHER ALERT ROUTINE. WEATHER and EVACUATION ALERTS mean action is needed.

Maintaining a moderate level of readiness year-round helps prevent a stressful and risky last-minute panic to prepare. Having a Weather Alert Routine and prep checklist that you review during “blue-sky” times, then practice when bad weather conditions are forecast, will reduce risks and keep everyone calmer and safer when you need to move quickly. You also need a Shelter-in-Place (SIP) plan for animals who cannot be moved, or circumstances when evacuation is not possible.

This guide includes recommendations and checklists for both Animal Evacuation and Shelter-in-Place planning and preparedness.

Weather Alerts vs Evacuation Alerts What’s the Difference?

Weather Alerts are issued by the National Weather Service. They help Emergency Managers, firefighters, and us, plan and prepare for dangerous weather. Weather alerts provide forecasts for dangerous conditions such as storms, heat, cold, wind, flash flood, fire weather.

- **Weather watch:** Conditions are right for potentially hazardous weather—get ready!
- **Weather warning:** Dangerous conditions are likely to impact you soon—take immediate action!
- **Red Flag Warning:** Signals extreme fire danger.
- **Purple Flag:** Particularly dangerous fire conditions.

Evacuation Alerts are urgent notifications issued by local Emergency Services to alert residents in specific locations that they are in danger.

- Evacuation Alerts vary from region to region. Be familiar with the levels of evacuation in your region. Sign up for local Emergency alerts. If your region utilizes pre-identified Evacuation Zones and/or routes, know all those that are relevant to you, your family, and your animals.

Know When to PREP and When to Go

If you plan to evacuate with your animals, the time to get ready is when you are under a Weather WATCH.

The time to make final preparations for evacuating or sheltering in place is when a Weather WARNING is issued.

!! Don't wait to evacuate!!

READY, SET, GO!

WEATHER ALERT ACTION ITEMS

Get READY during calm weather times throughout the year.

Make plans, stock supplies and ready kits, build a network of resources, update animal health records, insurance, important documents, reduce hazards around your home and property, work with your animals to improve herd and pack leadership skills, behavior, and trust.

On WEATHER WATCH Days

(Most items apply to storm and other severe weather alerts)

- Review your Evacuation and SIP plans
- Do a Hazard Hunt around your entire property: Home, decks, barn, feed storage, pastures, pens, coops (See Barn & Property Safety Checklist)

- Strengthen your property and vehicles
- Check infrastructure, supplies, equipment, tools,
- Inspect vehicles, fuel up or charge
- Practice with your animals, family, neighbors, buddy network helpers, staff, team members
- Run a loading practice
- Clean up, reduce ladder fuels
- Clear rig staging & turnarounds
- Check access for emergency vehicles
- Refresh or replace your high-visibility address signs and other signage
- Verify that Emergency Responders have access through your gate.
- Check loading area to make sure that rigs can enter, turn around, stage, load and leave as safely as possible to eliminate or minimize turning and backing.

Check condition and accessibility of tools and supplies.

- Water
- Accessible, recently inspected fire suppression equipment
- Power, generator, fuel
- Chain saw and other power tools and lube
- Work lights
- Ladders, shovels, rakes, extinguishers, hoses & nozzles

Family, Neighborhood, and Animals

- Refresh and increase supplies needed for the predicted conditions.
- Update family and emergency contacts.
- Do a test of your phone tree, group call or text numbers, or other communication plan.
- Keep devices charged. Check weather radios to make sure they're working, follow local emergency communications.

- Check medical and veterinary kits
- Make sure you have appropriate PPE for everyone
- Visible ID for all animals
- Animal equipment, halters, ropes
- Pet crates & supplies, leashes
- Ready kits
- Practice animal loading in crates, cars, trailers

WEATHER WARNING (Fire, wind, storm, etc.)

This is the time to be 100% ready to go or to leave with your animals, if possible. Although early evacuation may not always be possible, leaving when you receive a Weather Watch or Warning, is always safest and least stressful. Do not wait to evacuate.

WEATHER WARNING: GO or SIP?

Time to evaluate the risks and act accordingly

- Prepare for evacuation,
- Check with destination and transport resources
- Prep animals, carriers, crates
- Prep trailers, close windows, remove bedding
- Move animals to containment areas, confine pets, add visible ID
- Feed and exercise according to your plan
- Ready and stage vehicles for animal loading
- Load supplies, Go-Bags and documents
- Make final prep for animal SIP (See SIP Checklist)

Severe Weather Warning (Red Flag, Flash Flood, etc.) Evacuation WARNING

- Access to incoming traffic may be restricted.
- Evacuation levels can change quickly. You may not be allowed to return for a second or third trip.

- Make final preparations for any animals sheltering in place. (See SIP CHECKLIST)
- Evacuate all animals and people immediately.
- Contact local Animal Services or Sheriff dispatch if you have incoming or multiple transport rigs, or need animal transport assistance.

Evacuation ORDER

- There will be no access for unauthorized vehicles into the evacuation zones.
- If you need assistance for animals inside an evacuated area notify Animal Services or Sheriff dispatch.
- Help Responders help your animals: Post a sign or packet of information about animals on site in a highly visible location road.
- If Sherriff Evacuation Tags are utilized in your area, post one with your animal info.
- Notify animal services if there are animals and/or people sheltering in place.

Know When to Go, Evacuate, or Shelter-in-Place:

How to decide

Good evacuation and SIP decisions are based on risk assessment, conditions, and resources available.

EVACUATE NOW – If:

- Property is in a high-risk location for wildfire or flash flood.
- Is not defensible.
- You receive an Evacuation Alert, see smoke, or receive a flash flood warning.
- Has poor access, 1-way in/out, lacks onsite and nearby transport capacity for all animals.

- Lacks area for fast, safe loading and exit.
- Reduce animal population onsite to the number that can be transported by onsite vehicles and drivers.
- Evacuate all fragile animals first.
- Take steps to improve safety for animals who must shelter-in-place.
- Evacuate all remaining people and pets.
- Notify Animal Services or Sheriff of animals and humans on site.

GET READY for total or partial animal evac or SIP

Property and animals are at less risk if:

- Property is defensible and has good infrastructure and strong resources for emergency vehicles and Responders.
- Animal Services / Emergency Services are familiar with the site.
- Has transport capacity on-site and staged nearby for all animals.
- Evac routes are safe and defensible



Animal Emergency Planning SHELTER-IN-PLACE PREP & WEATHER WATCH ROUTINE CHECKLISTS

Create a plan for Weather Watch and Weather Warning days and practice it when dangerous weather is predicted.

If your Disaster Plan includes sheltering animals in place, include a designated refuge area, complete all preparations BEFORE Severe Weather WARNING, such as Red Flag, Flash Flood, or Winter Storm.

Your Weather Watch Routine should reflect the types of weather hazard(s) relevant to your area. Depending on the location, you may need a plan for multiple hazards such as wildfire, flooding, severe storms. Most preparations apply to all circumstances. Understanding the local topography, weather patterns, and fire behavior help you make the strongest plans for animal safety.

REFUGE AREA PREP

- ☐ Start pre-hydrating area several days ahead of predicted Elevated Fire Danger weather forecasts.
- ☐ Inspect animal refuge area for hazard tree limbs, loose metal roofing, loose objects that can become water or wind-borne.
- ☐ Check fences.
- ☐ Store feed in secure fire and water-resistant containers 50' (minimum) away from animals.
- ☐ Increase humidity in refuge area.
- ☐ Add water troughs, top off all.
- ☐ Secure troughs so they cannot tip over.
- ☐ Deactivate electric gates and fences.
- ☐ Leave gates closed and unlocked.

Get detailed home & property hardening guidance: Cal Fire, NFPA Firewise USA, Ready.gov

Local: Resource Conservation District, Fire Marshal, Fire Agency

EQUINE & LIVESTOCK PREP

- ☐ Remove halters, masks, wraps, sheets.
- ☐ Leave halters with ropes for every equine plus those needed for other species in fire and water-resistant container.
- ☐ Attach visible ID to animals (mane or tail tags, neckbands, crayon or paint)

SHELTER-in-PLACE PREP (Continued)

- ☐ Braid or trim tails up to hock length.
- ☐ Check for loose shoes and trim fetlock feathers.
- ☐ Turn all animals out, but never loose in close proximity to roads.
- ☐ Close barn and shed doors to prevent animals from running back in.
- ☐ Notify Animal Services of animals sheltered on site.

RED FLAG, FIRE WEATHER or SEVERE STORM WARNING ACTION ITEMS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Keep pets confined in a secure place.
- ☐ Move animals out of, and away from, barns.
- ☐ Keep equines and livestock animals in catch-pens for quick capture and loading.
- ☐ Close doors and gates to prevent re-entry.
- ☐ Top off troughs.
- ☐ Increase humidity around barns.
- ☐ Clean up: Remove cobwebs, all flammable “stuff”—hay, bedding, woodpiles, trash receptacles, blankets, furniture, umbrellas, fabric awnings, cushions.
- ☐ Fuel up or charge vehicles, stage all haul rigs for easy loading and exit.
- ☐ Confirm destinations.
- ☐ Confirm haul teams are ready.
- ☐ Prep animals for hauling.
- ☐ Review and update your loading order.
- ☐ Move difficult and vulnerable animals first.

To make the strongest plan for your needs, get expert information and assistance relevant to your area. Many types of resources can help you.

Animal Specialists (State-National): USDA, CDFA-C.A.R.E.S., ASPCA, FEMA, CVET, Equine Guelph, Animal World Health, AVMA.

(County, Regional, State): Local Univ. Co-Op Ext. Service, CART & CERT orgs, Sheriff, Animal Care & Control, Horse Council, Farm Bureau, equestrian groups, Pet Rescue-Adoption orgs

Fire Weather Barn Quick Tips

EVAC PLANNING: ASSESS the RISKS

- Can old or crippled animals be loaded and transported safely?
- How long will it take to load?
- How many rigs and helpers will you need?
- Do you have a plan for sick animals?



Evac Prep to Load and Go

- Contain animals so they're easy to catch and load
- Supplies, equipment, go-kits are loaded
- Rigs are inspected, fueled and staged facing out
- Trailer prepped
 - ✓ Clean, No bedding!
 - ✓ Windows closed



Remember
Your PPE!

Large Animal Evac Prep Are They Ready?

- Will they load?
- Are your helpers ready?
- ID on all
- Good halters & lead ropes for all, plus, extras



How Safe Is Your Property?

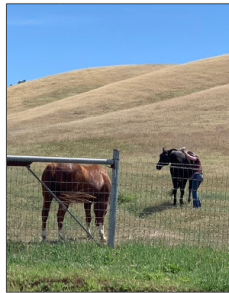
- Is your infrastructure **All-Hazards** safe?
- Will it be accessible **after** a fire or earthquake?
- If **water** is power-dependent, is there a backup source?
- Water tanks and pump secure?
 - Can Responders find and get into your property?



Hazard trees!

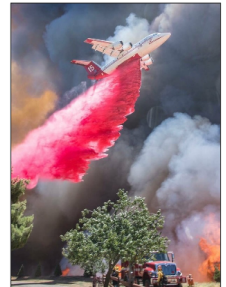
Your Animal Refuge Area

- Is it defensible?
- Irrigated or drylot pasture?
- How far from radiant heat sources (heavy brush or timber, big barns, etc.)?
- Secure, firesafe fencing?
- Away from busy roads?



Shelter-in-Place Risks

- Animals may be without care or clean water for several days.
- Animals might get loose if fences are down.
- Possible exposure to fire retardant or water air drops.
- Exposure to ember cast, smoke, heat, toxins.



Credit: 564FirePhotos

Site Prep for SIP

- Remove "stuff" around home and animal areas.
- Increase water storage -- add tanks, troughs.
- Secure troughs so they can't tip.
- Locate hay and bedding away from animals.
- Increase humidity in critical areas.



Animal Prep for Shelter-in-Place

- Add visible IDs.
- Remove masks, halters, blankets, wraps.
- Turn animals out but not loose.
- Close doors to barns and sheds.
- Gates secure but not locked.
- Hose down animals.
- Braid manes, prevent tails from dragging.
- Check for loose shoes.



EVAC OR SIP?

ASSESS THE RISKS

DISASTER PLANNING

Evac or SIP? Assess the Risks

- ✓ Human safety
- ✓ Infrastructure resilience
- ✓ Continuity of business operations
- ✓ Animal health
- ✓ Bio-Safety
- ✓ Product quality protection
- ✓ Public perception

Ranch Hazard Awareness

- ✱ Hay storage
- ✱ Vehicles, fuel tanks
- ✱ Structures, EVs, battery storage
- ✱ Pressurized tanks, lithium ion batteries, chemicals
- ✱ Trees, power lines
- ✱ Poor access, visibility, egress

Barn Hardening Checklist

- No flammable clutter inside or outside
- Maintain structures, gutters, vents
- Add extinguishers, hoses & nozzles, sprinklers
- Smoke alarms, security cameras

EVAC LOADING LIST

Applies to equines 
and many other herd species.

Keep written list updated. 

Include detailed ID info
& photos. 

Review protocol often
with staff, volunteers, and clients.  

Practice with haulers
and barn staff.  

Never separate barn
or pasture buddies.   

Never leave one
of a pair or group alone.  

Barn and Property Safety Checklist

Item	OK	To Do	Shopping List
Around the Property			
Check perimeter fencing and gates. Do you need to replace boards and wires? Is gate hardware in good working order? Do the gates drag on the ground?			
Do you need to remove any fallen branches, stumps and debris? Look for broken branches on trees and shrubs that are low enough a horse may run into it and cut or impale themselves.			
Check for poison plants.			
Check for overgrown bushes that may block gates.			
Is your address clearly visible on the street for easy access of emergency services?			
Check jumps and other equipment in your arenas. Make sure nothing has broken or come loose. Screws may work loose over time.			
Check water troughs and feeders for damage.			
Check drainage pipes for sharp edges.			
Run-In Sheds - Check the buildings over all condition, look for nails and other sharp objects. Erosion may cause gaps to form where a horse could catch a leg or hoof.			
Around the Barn			
Make sure debris, combustible material and weeds are cleared 30 feet from structures for fire protection			
Check barn structure. Is there damage to posts, beams or walls? Is the roof in good condition?			
Do the outside electrical outlets and switches have waterproof covers?			
Wash areas should be free of clutter and any shelves should be high enough that a horse will not hit the shelf.			
Are fire extinguishers in working order? Place fire extinguishers in all buildings. In large facilities, place fire extinguishers every 40 ft.			
Inspect all wiring. Older wiring may have damage from weather or rodents.			
Check all electrical cords. Appliances and equipment should be unplugged when not in use.			
Are there cobwebs and dust accumulating behind refrigerators and other appliance, around lights, near electrical sources? If so, clean the area.			

Barn and Property Safety Checklist

Grain and supplements should be stored in metal cans and lids secured with a bungee cord to prevent rodent infestation. This will also keep that escaped horse from gorging on grain.			
Hay & Shavings Storage. Whenever possible store these in a separate building. Storing hay in a well ventilated loft is preferable to the floor. If you store hay on the floor, place it on pallets or skids as far from stalls as possible. Keep the area clean.			
Are aisle ways clear of clutter? Any items stored in the aisles should be placed on hooks high enough that a panicked horse will not injure himself. Tack boxes and other items on the floor should not prevent stall doors from opening.			
Check stalls for damage to wood surfaces, broken or cracked feeders, protruding nails. Check the floor for damage or uneven surfaces. Look around the bottom of stalls for areas that may be hazardous when a horse rolls.			
Check latches and door knobs. Are they in good working order? Do they pose a hazard? Will tack or horses be hung up on them?			
Check floors for standing water, slick surfaces and uneven areas.			
Look for and destroy any wasps nests			
Throw away old medications. Remember if you did not use all of that antibiotic, etc. you should not keep it around. When in doubt, ask your vet.			
Check first aid and emergency supply kits. Do you need to replenish supplies? Throw away expired over the counter medications and replace as needed.			
Are emergency numbers and information posted near the phone or in the barn aisle? Is the information up-to-date?			
Boarding facilities should have safety rules clearly posted.			
Do you have "No Smoking" signs posted?			

ANIMAL EMERGENCY PLAN

For Owners, Caregivers, and Animal Sitters

Attach current
vaccination & vet
records to this plan.

- * Keep a copy with your important records.
- * Put a copy where helpers and responders can see it.
- * Give copies to animal caregivers.
- * Keep a copy electronically.

Pet's Name: _____

Pet's Description: _____

Medical Information

Veterinarian's Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Pet Allergies: _____

Special Diet Needs: _____

Medication: _____ Dose: _____

Medication: _____ Dose: _____

Attach copies of pet's vaccination records and a photo of your pet to this plan

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

EMERGENCY SHELTERING INFORMATION

For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Identify 2 hotels/motels that accept pets in your area for short-term emergencies and 2 long-term pet boarding options. Long-term options could include boarding kennels, veterinarians, and animal shelters.

Hotels/Motels:

Name: _____ Rate: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Rate: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Boarding Options:

Name: _____ Rate: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Rate: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Update your Animal Disaster Plan, Ready Kit, and emergency supplies twice a year.



Advance Health and Final Care or Pets

In the event of my death, or incapacity to act,
I want the following plan for the care and safety
of my pet(s) to be implemented.

HALTER
Project
www.HALTERproject.org

Pet's Name	Species	Age	Gender
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

I would like my pet(s) to be:

- ☐ Placed in an appropriate home by this rescue organization:

- ☐ A copy of this document is on file with this organization.
- ☐ Surrendered to the SPCA, local humane society, or pet rescue organization
- ☐ A copy of this document is on file with this organization.
- ☐ Euthanized, cremated, buried/remains disposed of with me, as mine.
- ☐ Placed with family or friends, as listed below.
- ☐ Each person named has a copy of this document.

Name	Address	Phone	Relationship
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Veterinarian Information

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- ☐ A copy of this document, and my pet(s) records are on file with my veterinarian.

Pet Owner Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____



FIRE WEATHER BARN ROUTINE

Prep on Fire Weather **WATCH** days.
Turn Prep into **Action** at start of Fire Weather **WARNING**
and **RED FLAG** periods.



Visit Cal Fire's "**Ready, Set, Go!**" web site or your local FireSafe Council or Firewise Community site for defensible space and property access guidance.

Your home, barn, property, and vehicles should be wildfire-ready before a Fire Weather alert is issued.

This checklist is focused on your equine, large animal and pet preparations. Confine animals where they can be caught quickly.

- ☒ Stage halters, lead ropes, leashes, crates and carriers for quick access.
- ☒ Make sure all animals have visible ID.
- ☒ Fuel up vehicles.
- ☒ Remove bedding from trailers.
- ☒ Review loading priorities.
- ☒ Prep trailer ties.
- ☒ Load truck copy of your AEP, including animal care sheets and current vax & health records, (including Coggins, if needed).
- ☒ Load Go-Bags and First-Aid kits for people & animals.
- ☒ Load feed, water, equipment.
- ☒ Load your Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).
- ☒ Stage transport rigs for a quick exit, and turn around without having to back up.
- ☒ Check in with your helpers and destinations.
- ☒ Confirm reservations.
- ☒ Review travel routes with all helpers & haulers.
- ☒ Transport all top-priority animals during daylight and allow time to return rigs to barn before dark.



HIGH FIRE WEATHER DANGER

- Strong north winds & low humidity
- Any fires that develop could spread rapidly
- Outdoor burning not recommended
- Avoid activities with open flames or sparks
- Don't drive onto dry grass or brush
- Properly discard cigarettes
- Know your wildfire risk & prepare an emergency plan in advance
- Evacuate if ordered to by local officials

NWS SACRAMENTO
WEATHER.GOV/STO

RED FLAG SHELTER-in-PLACE PREP

If your Evacuation Plan includes sheltering some animals in place, complete all preparations BEFORE Fire Weather WARNING or RED FLAG begins. More info on HALTERproject.com

SHELTER-in-PLACE CHECKLIST

- ☒ Have animal refuge areas prepared in advance.
- ☒ Leave extra halters & ropes stored in fire-resistant containers for every equine.
- ☒ Store feed in secure fire-resistant container 50' (min.) away from animals.
- ☒ Remove halters, masks, wraps, sheets. Check for loose shoes.
- ☒ Braid or trim tails up to hock length. Trim fletlock feathers.
- ☒ Increase humidity in refuge area.
- ☒ Add water troughs. Top them all off.
- ☒ Secure troughs so they cannot tip over.
- ☒ Leave gates closed and unlocked.
- ☒ Turn all animals out, but not loose in close proximity to roads.
- ☒ Close barn & shed doors.
- ☒ Deactivate electric gates & fences.
- ☒ Notify Animal Services of animals on site.