

Fire & Life Safety Information

“Horse Safety”

Maintain a “Fire Cache” – Tools to have on hand at your facility:

- A ladder long enough to reach the barn roof in case of a roof fire
- A minimum of 100 feet of pre-connected garden hose (or an adequate length to reach you structure) with a spray nozzle
- A shovel for clearing vegetation and throwing dirt
- A rake for clearing vegetation
- Water buckets
- A battery-powered radio for monitoring news reports and emergency evacuation broadcasts
- Keep these items together in an easily accessible place. Don't let the tools be used for any purpose other than firefighting. Mark them with red paint if necessary. Make sure everyone who lives, works or boards at your barn know where the “Fire Cache” is located

Reduce Fire Hazards – do some “hazard reduction” work around the barn:

- Store gasoline (as well as paints, solvents and other flammable materials) in an approved safety container away from occupied buildings
- Keep hay, straw, shavings, scrap wood and other combustible materials away from structures
- Clean roof surfaces and gutters regularly; rake perimeter areas
- Keep one hose (at least 100feet) with the nozzle connected at a strategic location at all times
- Keep trees and shrubs pruned
- Maintain a fuel break around all structures
- Keep weeds knocked down in trailer and equipment storage areas
- Identify two retreat routes from your property
- Post “no smoking” signs in and around the barn and in vegetated areas as appropriate
- Make sure chainsaws and other equipment have effective spark arrestors

Have a Plan:

- Develop a barn "Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan" and post it in a clearly visible place. Make sure that everyone who lives, works or boards at your barn understands the evacuation plan. Have an annual meeting to discuss fire contingency plans

Wear Safe Attire – In the event that you are involved in a fire, the right clothes can help shield you from radiant heat, burning embers and flames:

- Cotton fabrics are preferable to synthetics. Synthetics will melt and can cause serious burns!
- Wear long pants and a long sleeves shirt with the sleeves down.
- Sturdy leather gloves, while cumbersome, are essential to protect your hands from painful and disabling burns
- Leather or "vibram" type slip resistant shoes are the only safe footwear. Tennis shoes or rubber shoes will melt, causing serious burns.
- Wear a cotton bandana "bandit style" to shield your face. While wet cloth is more effective in smoke, the moisture can also cause serious steam burns to the face and respiratory system
- Goggles will help protect your eyes from smoke and burning embers

A word to the wise: Condition your horse to your strange appearance ... ahead of time!

Use Fire Safe Gear on Your Horse – The same principles for "fire safe clothing" apply to your horse.

- Avoid synthetic (nylon or plastic) halters or lead ropes. These may melt and cause serious burns to your horse and its handler. Leather halters and cotton lead ropes, while generally not as strong as nylon, will be safer
- Don't use nylon sheets, fly masks or other synthetic tack or equipment

Prepare An Evacuation Kit:

- Equip a plastic trash barrel (with lid) with the following:
 - Water bucket
 - Extra lead rope, halter, crop
 - Sheet or blanket
 - Wraps
 - Equine first aid items
 - Whatever else you feel is essential for your horse care and handling for the first 24 hours

Keep the kit lightweight so you can toss it in the back of a pickup truck or other vehicle. Store it in an easily accessible location and don't use it for anything but emergencies.

Just do it!

It has been shown time and time again, if you don't take the above precautions within the next 24 hours, the chances are very good that you won't do anything at all to prepare for a fire emergency.

When The Fire Comes Your Way – Your personal safety and that of the people working with you must be your first concern!

- Try to remain calm and alert; think clearly and act decisively
- Pay attention to conditions and fire behavior. Watch for sudden change in wind direction or speed: a dramatic change in air temperature or humidity: smoke and ash or burning embers dropping around you
- Post a lookout for possible dangers
- Identify your escape routes and safety areas
- Point your vehicle in the direction of your first escape route. Leave the doors unlocked and the keys in the ignition
- Maintain good communications with the people you're working with; give clear instructions and make sure they are understood
- Cooperate with firefighters and law enforcement officers. Your safety and the safety of other civilians and emergency personnel – is their paramount concern
- Do not block roads with vehicles or trailers. Fire equipment needs roadway access to protect your property

If You Are Caught In The Fire – If you are not able to evacuate in advance of the fire and are caught out in the open when fire hits, consider the following:

- The best temporary shelter will be where the vegetation is sparse. This could include well-grazed pastures, open arenas, road cuts and banks, large boulders or rock out cropping, and depressions in the ground. Clear as much vegetation and flammable "ground litter" as you can while the fire is approaching, then lie face down in the depression and cover yourself with anything that will shield you from the heat.

Good and bad places to go:

- Vehicle – move the vehicle to a bare ground or a sparsely vegetated area, close all windows and doors, lie on the floor and cover yourself with a jacket or blanket. The fuel tank will normally not explode at all. Keep calm, stay in the vehicle, and let the fire pass
- Road Cut – if caught without shelter on a road lie face down along the road cut or ditch on the uphill side (less fuel and less convection heat). Cover yourself with anything that will shield you from the heat of the fire.
- Natural Chimneys – a natural chimney is a narrow, steep canyon that concentrates heat and updraft. Temperatures may exceed several thousand degrees Fahrenheit during a fire. Also, precious oxygen is quickly consumed by the advancing fire leading to the threat of asphyxiation. Avoid natural chimneys.
- Saddles – topographic saddles are wide natural paths for fire winds and vegetation;; fires tend to be drawn up and over these depressions with great speed and intensity. Avoid saddles.

Never try to outrun the head of a fast moving fire! Try to get to the flanks or into a burned area.