

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Veterinary practices must create emergency plans with specific circumstances in mind. Plans must account not only for patrons and staff, but must also make provisions for multiple species of owned animals. Emergencies such as earthquakes, fires, floods, and gas leaks can occur unexpectedly and create a chaotic crisis situation. Understanding your hospital's emergency preparedness plan and procedures will help you respond to the situation effectively, and minimize losses as a result.

LEARNING MATERIAL

Types of Hazards:

Natural	Technological	Human-Caused
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Avalanche – Disease outbreak – Drought – Earthquake – Flood – Hurricane – Landslide/ Mudslide – Tornado – Tsunami – Volcanic eruption – Wildfire – Winter storm – Other: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dam/ levee break – HAZMAT issue – Mechanical failure in airplane or train resulting in crash or derailment – Nuclear meltdown – Power failure – Other: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arson – Civil disturbance – Cyber attacks – School violence – Sabotage – Terrorist acts – Vehicular accidents – Other:

A disaster contact list can assist you during an emergency response. Here are suggestions of those who should be included on your list:

- ✓ all employees (include home phone numbers)
- ✓ local police department
- ✓ local fire department
- ✓ local office of emergency services
- ✓ local animal control department
- ✓ ambulance service
- ✓ hospital
- ✓ insurance company
- ✓ insurance agent
- ✓ telephone company
- ✓ gas company
- ✓ electric company
- ✓ fire and/or security alarm companies
- ✓ tenants (if any)
- ✓ building owner/manager
- ✓ key customers and suppliers
- ✓ local news media (TV, radio, newspaper)

Your practice may opt to maintain a written disaster plan and review it with employees to make sure every person understands their role. At a minimum, all employees should know how to report an emergency, how to safely evacuate the building, and how to protect themselves and others in an emergency. Consider designating one employee per shift to act as an emergency coordinator. The plan can also address:

- Personal safety considerations
- Animal safety considerations
- Evacuation priorities and procedures
- Meeting locations
- Business continuity plan (to keep your business operational after a disaster)
- Communication plan (amongst employees and to pet owners/ clients.)

Basic supplies for a veterinary practice to have on hand during a disaster can include:

- ✓ Portable battery-operated radio with extra batteries
- ✓ NOAA weather radio with a warning alarm tone and battery backup
- ✓ First aid kit (human)
- ✓ Maps of the area
- ✓ Fire extinguishers
- ✓ Flashlights
- ✓ Replacement batteries
- ✓ Basic tool kit with gloves, clean-up rags, and other tools unique to your business
- ✓ Small supply of bottled water and nonperishable food
- ✓ Camera and film for documenting damage
- ✓ Tarps
- ✓ Rope/ tape
- ✓ Tools

Animal specific disaster supplies include:

- ✓ Handling equipment such as ropes, leashes, gloves
- ✓ Carriers/ crates and cages for cats, small breed dogs and large breed dogs
- ✓ Bowls
- ✓ Food and water (canned food works well)
- ✓ Can opener
- ✓ *Identification tags*
- ✓ Cat litter
- ✓ Plastic bags/ garbage bags
- ✓ Paper towels
- ✓ Newspaper
- ✓ Exam gloves
- ✓ Hand sanitizer
- ✓ Bucket
- ✓ A flat cart to move crates and supplies
- ✓ A method for transporting animals

Any records that are necessary to ensure the survival of your practice should be protected. Back-up computer records regularly, and store tapes/disks at a secure off-site location. Records for most practices include payroll, accounting, personnel, production, inventory, suppliers, and client records (medical records).

A disaster may prevent you from returning to your facility for some time. Where would you relocate? In choosing a temporary location, there is much to consider, such as:

- ✓ How much building space do you need and how will you get it?
- ✓ How many employees will you need at various stages of your recovery?
- ✓ What equipment, supplies, and raw materials are needed?
- ✓ Can some or all operations be subcontracted on a temporary basis?
- ✓

GUIDELINES FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Take an “all-hazards” approach to emergency planning. Identify the different types of emergencies that could occur and note the ones that are most likely to occur in your location. Remember, there are multiple types of emergencies including natural disasters, large-scale accidents, and acts of terrorism.
- Identify a staff member to be the emergency coordinator.
- Create an emergency plan, and review it with staff so that everyone is familiar with their role in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that your emergency plan includes posted escape routes and procedures, along with a predetermined meeting spot as well as emergency contact and medical information for employees.
- Assign roles for specific staff members in case of an emergency (e.g. communication, search and rescue, first aid, etc.).
- Prepare emergency supplies such as water, food, first aid, plastic bags, flashlights, batteries, a radio, and blankets.
- Document contingency plans for various events and become familiar with these plans.
- Conduct practice emergency drills to ensure your plan is thorough and that staff members know what to do in case of an emergency.
- Additional planning guidance and disaster preparedness resources can also be found at cal-cares.com as well as from the CVMA, VISC, and Allianz.

Remember that the safety of staff and clients takes precedence over patients.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS SAFETY QUESTIONS

Which types of emergencies or disasters are more likely to occur in our area? What is our plan for each?

Who is our emergency coordinator and where do we keep emergency contact information?

Who is responsible for doing what during an emergency?

Where is our emergency meeting location outside the practice in the event of an emergency?

What supplies do we have on hand in case of an emergency and where are they located?

ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS TRAINING RESOURCES

Cal OES Threat and Hazard Locator- an interactive map to assist you in determining the most likely types of disasters to occur in your area. <http://myhazards.caloes.ca.gov/>

The California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES): <http://cal-cares.com>

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Disaster Preparedness for Veterinarians: <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reference/disaster/Pages/default.aspx>

The California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) Guide to Evaluating a Veterinary Practice for Disaster Preparedness: http://cvma.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/EvaluateYourDisasterPlan_2014.pdf