

Emergency Management FACTSHEET



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Emergency Preparedness Tips

Emergencies and disasters like wildfires, droughts, floods and disease can occur with little warning and have devastating consequences. Crop and livestock producers, like all business managers, need to have a comprehensive strategy to manage these risks and are strongly advised to develop an emergency preparedness plan for their farm.

This factsheet contains a few tips that help you to be prepared for an emergency event. It contains general considerations that apply to most producers to prepare for a variety of different disaster events and tips that are typically applicable only for certain disaster events or only to livestock producers.

For more detailed information, please visit [Emergency Preparedness](#). On this website, you will also find Emergency Management Guides for the beef, dairy and pork producers developed by the BC Ministry of Agriculture with the livestock industries.

1. General Emergency Preparedness Tips for All Producers

1.1 All emergencies and disasters

- Know the risk and type of disaster that can occur in your area. What disasters are most likely for your farm and community? Provide a history of past disaster events in the community.
- How would you be warned? Learn the warning signals for your area. Do you receive emergency broadcasts for your area?
- Have your premises identification (ID) number handy. The British Columbia Premises ID program allows for rapid notification of livestock and poultry producers during animal health or environmental emergencies. Premises ID information can be used during an emergency to locate farm animals, notify and communicate with affected operators, estimate animal numbers for evacuation planning, and facilitate the re-entry process for operators in affected areas. All operators with animals on their premises are strongly encouraged to register with the program through the Ministry website: [Premises ID](#)
- Do you have an emergency liaison contact at your local government?
- Draw a farm site map that indicates buildings, access routes, barriers, livestock locations, locations of hazardous substances, waste storage, water supply, drainage ditches and electrical panels. Clearly identify key assets. Make sure that map can be easily found and is accessible to emergency responders.
- Make a list of your farm inventory including livestock, machinery, feeds, fertilizer, pesticides, fuel and semen. Make sure the list is updated at least once per year.

- Is your farm business insurance up to date and what does it cover? In general, insurance is available for livestock injuries or mortalities, temporary livestock relocations, infrastructure losses (barns, buildings, milking equipment, etc.) and for other farm losses. Check and confirm with your broker as to what is or would be covered. Government post-disaster relief funds for non-insurable losses may become available in some situations but may not fully cover all losses.
- Keep an updated list of emergency phone numbers that include local emergency management, veterinarians, neighbors, haulers and most important suppliers or businesses providing services to your farm.
- Prepare a list of people who can assist on short notice in the event of an evacuation. Communicate with those people that they are on your list. Update the list regularly.
- Secure copies of insurance policies and other essential farm documents. Store them in containers that are waterproof and fireproof and make sure those documents are accessible at any time.
- Is your staff/family informed of emergency plans and contacts? Make sure to have several on-farm and off-farm contact persons with detailed knowledge of, or that at least know where to find, all relevant and updated essential information about your farm (contacts, maps, inventory, animal identification, relocation information if applicable, location of fuel and chemical storage containers, emergency and first aid kit, electrical power shut-off, etc.).
- Hazardous materials (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, fuel) should be stored in secured areas, preferably on high ground and/or on shelving off the ground. These areas should be protected so that chemical spills will not release into the environment.
- Make sure chemicals, tanks, electrical panels, barrels, storage containers, etc. are correctly labeled.
- Store only the minimum volume of chemicals necessary for your operation on site. Safely dispose of expired or unused chemicals on a regular basis at accredited hazardous waste disposal companies. Contact your local government for addresses.
- Remove trash as often as possible.
- Empty septic tanks frequently.
- Ensure sanitary sewer systems are protected by seals and backflow valves.
- Mount sensitive equipment on pallets.
- Take into consideration that you may be isolated for some time as suppliers may not be able to access some roads. Make sure that you have adequate water, feed, bedding material, dairy supplies, frozen semen, medications (check whether complete and expiry date), etc. on hand for an extended period.
- Ensure that emergency generators (if used) are properly installed by a certified electrician to prevent feeding electricity back into the electrical grid which can endanger responders and create electrical fires.
- Purchase extra fuel in case of prolonged power disruptions.
- Make arrangements with buyers to accept early shipment of product to reduce inventory.
- Before you leave because of an emergency, protect your residence, equipment, feed and hay supplies, infrastructure (barns, corrals, fencing, etc.), in case re-entry is delayed and for recovery of farm operations.
- Make sure that access to your property, home and essential assets is unobstructed. Also ensure that your property and assets are easily identifiable for emergency responders (street number, signage, etc.)
- Be prepared where possible to assist other growers or livestock producers who may have to evacuate.

1.2 Further Preparedness Tips Specific to Flood Plains

- Keep a supply of materials such as ropes and wire, sandbags, plywood, tools, plastic sheeting and lumber handy for emergency waterproofing. Keep an updated list of local suppliers of those items.
- Move farm equipment and supplies to high ground where possible.
- Remove all chemicals and store away from any flood levels. Pesticides, and fertilizers may cause pollution and even poisoning.
- Anchor fuel tanks firmly or fill with water to ensure they will not float away in floodwaters. Close valves.
- Keep in mind that wet hay may spontaneously combust due to natural composting processes. Consider storing hay away from other buildings in case the hay storage area catches fire after the flood waters have receded.
- Shut off electrical power to areas where flooding is imminent.

Wells

- Ensure that your wellhead is protected by a surface seal and a cap to prevent downward movement of water and contaminants. Be ready to turn off the electricity to your well pump just prior to the flood.
- Abandoned water wells should be plugged by a qualified well driller registered with the Province of BC.

1.3 Further Preparedness Tips Specific to Fire

- Have fire extinguishers in all barns and all vehicles. Verify annually that they are full and not expired.
- Control grass and other combustible materials around assets.
- Consider maintaining fire ponds.

2. Additional Preparedness Tips for Livestock Producers

- Consider moving some cattle, especially non-milking stock, in the days leading to potential flooding.
- Plan for dangerous stock, such as bulls, to be relocated well before evacuation becomes necessary.
- Investigate the availability of alternative livestock accommodations on higher ground and/or shelter and feeding sites that may be available nearby (for example neighbours) if relocation becomes necessary. Put together a list of relocation destination farms/sites in the case of flood or fire.
- Make sure the relocation site is suitable to your needs, is readily accessible and at minimal risk to becoming a high-risk zone if the emergency event were to extend to a larger area.
- Ensure that enough feed and medical supplies are or can be made available at the destination site and during transport at short notice.
- Purchase extra supplies for use at the relocation site – marking pencils, rope halters, washtub for cleaning equipment, feeding buckets, etc.
- Dairy producers should consider arrangement for temporary milking as well as have a plan in place with their milking equipment dealer in case the temporary new site requires recommissioning of milking equipment.
- Identify and record access and egress routes for your livestock.

- Compile a list of resources you will need that can assist on short notice with relocation – livestock haulers, stock trailers, loading chutes, portable corrals, etc.
- In some cases, the various animals of a production system cannot be combined in or moved on common liners, so be prepared to address how this will be handled. Make sure the list is updated.
- All cattle should have positive identification (ear tags, brands or tattoos, livestock marking pens). Keep a record of your animal identification in case animals from different herds must share a relocation site.
- Relocations can stress your livestock and reduce the animal's ability to withstand infections. Relocations may also require your livestock to be mixed with others thereby increasing exposure to possible infections to which they may have little or no resistance. In advance, discuss with your veterinarian how your livestock can best be protected if they must be relocated and what medications you should have on hand. As well, review the herd's vaccination program and individual animal vaccination status.
- Protect feed and water from contact with wild animals and birds.
- Anchor fuel and milk tanks firmly or fill with water to ensure they will not float away in floodwaters. Close valves.
- Poultry producers in flood plains should consider moving birds to the top floor in two storey barns, if space is available.
- Pork and poultry producers should consider planning with marketing organizations or processors regarding the sale of animals that are approaching market weight.
- In the case of dairy, notify the B.C. Milk Marketing Board and your milk hauler, milking equipment dealer, feed and semen representatives, and veterinarian of a planned destination if evacuated.
- Horse owners should review Horse Council BC's disaster preparedness guidelines found on Horse Council's website at: <https://www.hcbc.ca/index.php/equine-welfare/disaster-preparedness/>

Manure Pits:

- If field conditions are suitable, manure pits should be emptied, and the manure spread to land two weeks prior to expected flooding; however, first check with B.C. Ministry of Agriculture officials to assess the risk of manure spreading.
- Prior to flooding, in high priority areas and in regions where high-water tables are expected, manure pits should be filled with water to the half way point to prevent the bottom of the manure pit from breaking due to increased hydrostatic forces.

For more information about emergency preparedness, please contact the Ministry at AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca or toll-free: 1-888-221-7141 and visit the BC Ministry of Agriculture website at: [Emergency Preparedness](#)