

SAMPLE EQUESTRIAN FACILITY SAFETY PLAN

(Based on a park district but applicable anywhere.)

Section 1. Intent and Scope

1.1. Intent

This Operations Guide is intended to provide a framework for organizing safe and efficient relocation of horses and other equines as may be necessary due to significant natural or man-caused wide-area emergencies or disasters. For the purposes of this document, the term, “horses” is intended to mean any animals of the equine genus that may be boarded or may be used in facilities within and/or associated with the Park District.

The Park District’s Public Safety Division recognizes that horses are a form of valuable property for which many owners establish bonds and relationships similar to household pets. As a result, most owners are likely to place themselves at some risk to protect their horses during emergency events. Therefore it is in the interest of public safety and for the safety and efficiency of emergency operations that Public Safety Division members engage in pre-incident planning and develop practical operational guidelines in order to better coordinate the efforts of stakeholders, interest groups and Public Safety Division personnel with respect to horses.

1.2. Scope

These guidelines shall apply to all activities involving horses that take place within the Park District and may include stakeholders and interest groups from outside the Park District that frequent park lands, park facilities and trails, and/or that may have valuable expertise and are willing to voluntarily contribute to horse-related safety and rescue activities.

These guidelines are not intended to prevent any person from using reasonable judgment during an emergency event nor is it intended to encourage any citizen or stakeholder to take risks. These guidelines are intended to help provide greater safety, order and efficiency during events in which citizens and/or stakeholders would predictably be involved. By developing these guidelines the Park District is not assuming any responsibility for, or liability for the decisions and voluntary actions of, any citizens or stakeholders involved in such activities.

Section 2. Major Emergency Events

2.1. Types of emergency events (general overview)

A number of potential emergency events could impact the safety of horse related operations and activities in the Park District. Such events are likely to include, but are not limited to, facility fires, wildfires, severe storms having flooding or wind damage potential, earthquakes, and human caused events such as accidents involving hazardous materials or violent acts. Each type of emergency event has its own unique risk factors that in some instances may allow for the safe and orderly removal of horses or the reconfiguration of facilities and/or holding areas in order to shelter in place. An emergency event could be such that the immediate evacuation of all citizens and stakeholders is warranted and the disposition of horses will become the sole responsibility of emergency and public safety personnel.

2.2. Facility fires

Facility fires pose immediate threats to horses and any humans attempting to evacuate horses and save personal property due to the immediate proximity of the emergency to the horses, the flammability of materials generally associated with horse facilities, and that the facilities ordinarily used to contain and control the horses are likely compromised or rendered unusable due to the fire event. A facility fire is most likely to occur with little if any advance warning, can be fast moving, is typically chaotic, often involves the greatest risk to humans, particularly horse owners and facility operators. Such events can result in numbers of large, agitated animals being set loose for their own survival that in turn could impact the safety of emergency responders and other members of the public.

2.3. Wildfires

Equestrian facilities within the Park District are by their very nature located in wildfire hazard zones. On-premises fire prevention and fuels management activities can substantially reduce the threats posed by ordinary wildfires. However due to a number of factors, wildfires can become serious threats over a very short period of time. Furthermore, sustained smoke inhalation by horses can pose serious challenges to life and health even if a fire does not actually reach a horse facility. In many instances the path and threats posed by wildfires can be reasonably predicted and there may be time to safely relocate animals if such activities are preplanned and carried out in an orderly manner.

2.4. Meteorological Events

Severe storms can produce flash floods, significant wind damage and soil instability (mud slides.) Secondary impacts may involve disruption of utilities, impeded access and egress due to downed trees and power lines, and water damage to on-premises feed supplies for horses. Special events can (and historically have been) rescheduled when a significant storm event has been forecast. However in boarding facilities it would ordinarily be expected that horses would shelter in place during storms. The ability of a given facility to continue providing proper care, custody and control of horses following a significant meteorological event may be compromised and efforts may be required to provide for the continued proper care for animals. Careful post-event inspection of the premises and facilities is often warranted.

2.5. Seismic Events

All of the Park District equestrian facilities are proximate to some active fault. A significant seismic event could cause major damage to structures at horse facilities and potentially cause the collapse of weaker structures. Structures that appeared to have withstood the effects of initial temblors may have sustained damage that is not obvious but that could make them vulnerable to aftershocks. A significant seismic event can be particularly problematic given the probabilities of widespread demands on emergency responders, uncertainty as to the extent of damage to structures, instability of damaged structures during aftershocks, and potential disruption of utilities (water, power, communications, etc.)

2.6. Human Caused Events

Some Park District properties are located in or near urban centers, industrial zones, interstate highways, railroads, refineries, chemical plants, underground pipelines and similar hazards that could pose wide area threats resulting from mechanical failures, human error or intentional acts. Citizens can be instructed to go indoors, close all windows and turn off HVAC appliances. Horses are generally left exposed to whatever the prevailing air currents bring and they have sensitive respiratory systems. If horses are to be safely relocated, the process must be orderly and expedient, and be completed before conditions are such that humans should no longer be out in the "open air" in the vicinity of the horse facility.

A human caused event could also include a criminal act whereupon horses are released and they must be recovered before they injure themselves or cause accidents.

Section 3. Individual Emergency Events (Horse Related Accidents)

3.1. Types of emergency events (general overview)

Horse / equestrian activities carry with them a certain amount of risk. Whether in a formal horse facility or out on Park District trails, horses and riders have widely varying degrees of training and expertise. Human error on the part of a rider or handler, as well as intentional or unintentional actions on the parts of other persons present can initiate a chain of events that results in a horse-related accident. Driver error, mechanical failure or the actions of others on roadways can result in accidents such as trailers overturning while transporting horses to or over Park District Properties. Human error, vandalism, failures of fencing and corral structures and wide area emergency events can result in horses roaming at large outside their designated holding areas. These various potential events should be identified as well as the most appropriate methods for addressing each.

3.2. Equestrian Accidents

For this subsection, the term “Equestrian” includes all forms of horse-human activities including, but not limited to, riding, driving (pulling any type of horse drawn vehicle,) eventing, training, and handling horses “from the ground.”

Equestrian accidents typically involve one or more injured citizens with the potential that injuries may be traumatic in nature. Accidents in remote areas could require “Short Haul” (helicopter Stokes basket) emergency operations similar to responses involving back country OHV accidents. The most critical element in initiating a proper response to an equestrian accident involves citizens recognizing the potential significance of the accident and requesting an appropriate level of help. Equestrians tend to shrug off injuries which in some instances are later discovered to be serious. Public Safety Division dispatchers may have to carefully interrogate callers in order to determine if there are any indications of potential trauma or entrapment, if horses are running at large, or there are other risks to responders and/or citizens so that appropriate resources can be dispatched.

Accidents occurring at events where equestrians and horses have congregated include the added elements of keeping equestrians and their horses calm, out of the way and safety contained during response, field treatment and transport activities. A major contributing factor associated with conducting emergency operations at a busy facility or during an event with minimum likelihood of creating some kind of secondary accident lies with the facility’s or

event's emergency plan and the ability of those responsible for the facility or event to effectively implement the plan.

3.3. Technical Large Animal Rescues

Technical large animal rescues involve any large animal that is trapped or is injured to the extent that it requires technical expertise and specialized equipment in order to resolve the emergency. Such a rescue may involve human victims, either as a direct result of the accident event itself, or as a result of unskilled attempts by owners or bystanders to resolve the emergency on their own and whereupon their actions caused them to be injured or trapped following the initial emergency event. (This Procedure Guide focuses on horse and equestrian issues, however principles involving technical large animal rescues could encompass any livestock, including permitted grazing cattle and livestock that strayed onto Park District properties.)

Technical large animal rescue responses may be required following seismic events or severe storms in order to prevent citizens from taking undesirable risks and to safely remove horses from compromised structures.

3.4. Loose horses

Equestrian accidents can result in one or more horses escaping from the accident scene. On-scene citizens as well as professional responders often focus on the human victims. Excited bystanders, on-scene activities and the arrival of emergency resources can be very disturbing to horses not desensitized to such activities. Locating loose horses and properly containing them can be critical to overall incident scene safety, particularly if a rescue helicopter will arrive at the incident.

3.5. Citizen First Responder on the Trail

"Citizen first responder" orientation is an important element of the Park District's Trail Safe Program as it helps those equestrians who frequently use Park District facilities better prepare for emergencies. Trained citizen participants tend to more accurately identify the seriousness of an emergency, are better prepared to accurately report details of the emergency to Public Safety Division dispatchers, have greater understanding of actions not to take that could exacerbate the emergency, have a better understanding of what first aid measures they may be qualified to provide, and they have some knowledge as to what other actions are appropriate for citizens on a scene to take such as protecting the victim from being mishandled, providing

safe containment of loose horses, sending someone to a road or trail where emergency responders would be expected in order to guide them to the accident location, etc.

Section 4. Facility Identification, Risk Assessments and Incident Preplanning

4.1. Facility Identificaton

All facilities in the Park District where horses are boarded, congregate for events and/or competitions, and where horses are permitted for overnight camping should be identified and inventoried. Such inventories should include the numbers of horses and citizens that would ordinarily be expected at these premises, including event attendance, site specific risks, on-hand resources, containment (corral) capabilities for visiting or relocated animals, and other data that would be useful for pre-incident planning.

The term “facility” as used in this section also includes trails that are commonly used for horse activities and/or may be used for special events such as trail competitions and endurance rides.

4.2. Risk Assessments

4.3. Incident Preplanning

(This section should include potential numbers of horses needing relocation, available space for intake from other facilities, etc.)

4.3.1 Facility Resources

4.3.2. Animal Identification

4.3.3. Special Needs Identification

4.3.4. Shelter In Place Issues

4.3.5. Collection Point Issues

Section 5. Horse Identification

5.1. Individual Horse Profiles

Boarding facilities should maintain readily accessible binders that include documentation on each horse that is boarded. Such documentation should include breed, physical description including distinguishing marks (preferably including a photo,) special identifiers such as

microchips, brands or tattoos, the horse's foaling year, identification of legal owner and emergency contact information, identification of boarder and emergency contact information if the boarder is the party responsible but is not the legal owner, any special dietary needs, veterinary history (vaccinations, contagious conditions, etc.), any special veterinary needs, what types of trailers the horse can be expected to and not to load into, and any special behavioral issues that should be considered if the horse has to be handled by strangers or placed in an unfamiliar environment (e.g., a biter, kicker, stress cribber.)

Consideration should be given to maintaining copies of Individual Horse Profiles on Cloud storage that would be accessible to Animal Control Officers and/or the Incident Animal Rescue Group.

5.2. Relocation Documentation

The relocation of all horses should be properly documented and records kept including which stall, corral or paddock the horses came from, the identification of their owners, if known, whether or not contact could be made with the owners, who provided transport including vehicle description and license number, contact information for those providing transportation, the intended destination of the animals, contact information for the receivers of the horses, and follow-up notations as to where the horses were actually delivered and can be claimed by owners.

Considering the possibility that an emergency could rapidly intensify and the authorized evacuation interval could become quite short, the boarding facility should start organizing evacuation options and paperwork in advance of any formal evacuation orders or other obvious need to take action.

5.3. Emergency Identification

There may be emergency conditions where the character of the emergency and numbers of animals being relocated will not facilitate detailed recordkeeping. In such instances all animals removed from a specific premises by persons other than their owners should be marked with some visible and universally recognizable indication as to their origin, such as writing the facility's initials on the hip of each horse with a cattle marking crayon either at departure or upon arrival at a collection point if conditions do not permit marking on departure. Peer to peer participants in this program should agree on standardized abbreviated facility ID markers.

Section 6. Organized Relocations

6.1. Peer to Peer Relocation Activities

The term “peer to peer” as used in this subsection refers both to facilities who may reciprocally assist each other and to individual horse owners and related citizens who may reciprocally assist each other through formal or informal agreements.

A formally organized “peer to peer” evacuation system can oftentimes provide the safest and most reliable method for removing horses from an emergency zone and ensuring their successful relocation to another suitable location. Horse owners who are familiar with each other’s horses often have a better sense as to the characteristics of the other horses and may be somewhat familiar to those horses, thus facilitating a safer and more orderly removal process when the owners cannot be present. Encouraging the development of individual peer to peer relationships is an important element in evacuation planning. Persons preauthorized to relocate horses should be identified on facility Individual Horse Profiles, and horses needing relocation should be turned over to preauthorized peers when such persons are available.

Peer to peer relationships between facilities can ensure that destinations for relocated horses can be pre-planned, that necessary intake operations can be effectively organized, that agreed upon intake facilities are not overwhelmed with more animals than they can accommodate, and that temporary accommodations can be established and records maintained in the event that the number of arriving horses exceeds the facility’s capacity and some horses need to be relayed to other collection points.

It must be recognized that at any given time peer assistance by individuals or facilities may be limited or unavailable, so alternative options must be developed.

While peer to peer activities may fall exclusively among the private parties, all activities should be reported and records maintained so that Animal Control Officers and/or the Incident Animal Rescue Group are made aware of the successful relocation of animals from the emergency operations area.

6.2. Large Animal Evacuation Teams

There is always the likelihood that a portion of citizens involved peer to peer preplanning will not be immediately available when an incident occurs that requires rapid evacuation or that peer to peer participation does not cover all horses that require removal. Stakeholders (facilities, horse clubs, organized equestrian groups, etc.) should be encouraged to participate

in recognized basic large animal movement and rescue training programs so that members become certified to at least “Awareness Level” Technical Large Animal Rescue, and demonstrate appropriate proficiency in safe trailer operating skills.

Trained volunteer teams tend to function more compatibly with the Incident Command structure, communicate more effectively, operate more safely and are more accountable than self-deployed citizen resources.

Each team and team member that is recognized by the Public Safety Division should have some visible form of identification issued by the Public Safety Division or other qualified entity such as a county’s or local agency’s Animal Control Department. The purpose of this identification is to help public safety personnel identify who has received sufficient training to operate safely in an emergency zone. Such identification is not intended to imply any form of official authority or to gain unauthorized entry into operational areas for which entry has been restricted to authorized emergency personnel. Furthermore the recognition of the qualifications of citizen-responders does not imply that the Park District has undertaken any responsibility for such responders or is liable for their actions.

Response teams should have a dedicated Team Leader and Assistant Team Leader. Team Leaders and Assistant Team Leaders should have more advanced ICS and EMI training, and they should meet periodically with the Fire Department’s Large Animal Liaison to ensure compatibility of the teams’ activities with the Public Safety Division’s overall mission. Details such as notification, mobilization, communications, operational safety, coordination, compliance with ICS and safety procedures, accountability, documentation, and maintenance of skills should be addressed in such meetings.

Response teams should organize, respond, stage, deploy and demobilize in accordance with applicable ICS protocols. Teams would generally consist of five similar resources, however it is not unusual for a small animal unit, such as an Animal Control truck, to accompany a large animal team to assist in the event small animals require removal. It is generally preferable that all animal rescue resources deploy and return as a coherent body.

6.3. Citizen Self-Responders

Citizens often self-respond to significant incidents. They may have varying degrees of qualifications with respect to operating in higher risk zones and in stressful situations, and the equipment that they arrive with (i.e., horse and stock trailers) can vary significantly in capability and application.

One operational consideration involves establishing an Animal Rescue Group Staging Area associated with, but separate from the staging area for other tactical resources. The Animal Rescue Staging Area Manager should have appropriate large animal experience and could be a representative from a county or local agency Animal Control Department, a fire agency representative familiar with large animal operations, or a volunteer familiar with large animal operations who is also certified to manage a staging area.

Subset considerations include utilizing competent citizen self-responders as force multipliers for formal teams, particularly if the self-responders are known to team members, can be relied upon as serving as assistants, and have personal protective clothing appropriate for the incident. Citizen self-responders can also be useful in helping organize collection points, acquiring resources needed to sustain relocated animals, assisting with intake records, relaying animals from initial collection points to longer term holding areas, and performing other desirable tasks that take place away from the incident's higher risk operational area. Such deployments can help prevent certified volunteers from being committed to non-skilled but essential support activities when they may be needed to help achieve tasks more directly associated with immediate evacuations.

Section 7. Emergency Animal Releases

7.1. Recognition that emergency releases sometimes occur.

It is not the intent of this procedure guide to encourage the emergency release of any large animal into any unenclosed area, however in reviewing other major incidents where conditions deteriorated rapidly, citizens have turned horses loose to fend for themselves when they were unable to safely evacuate the animals before being ordered to leave. Given that this behavior is not likely to change, guidelines are provided in an effort to address some related safety issues

7.2 Identification of released horses.

Anyone releasing any horse into an unconfined area should tie bright reflective plastic warning ribbon around the horse's neck if such can be done without jeopardizing the safety of the citizens so involved. Such ribbon should be capable of tearing off the horse without the horse sustaining injury if it were to become snagged on a fixed object.

7.2 Reporting emergency releases.

All emergency releases must be reported to Incident Command or the Incident Animal Rescue Group so that emergency responders can be made aware of the types and numbers of animals that may be at large in their areas of operation.

THIS DOCUMENT IS UNDER DEVELOPMENT.