

American Veterinary Medical Association

Guide to Writing a Veterinary Practice Emergency Plan

Disasters occur locally and are managed locally. When developing a disaster plan, veterinary practice owners and staff need to begin by understanding their businesses, available local resources, and where needs exist. Before a disaster strikes, find out what jurisdictions and organizations have authority over animal and business issues that may impact your practice. Your practice's readiness depends largely on considering our practice's day to day operations and having a business continuity plan prepared ahead of time. A contingency plan does not need to be complex; the activities of creating a plan and practicing it with staff can help prepare your business for emergencies.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you make decisions about preparing your practice for disasters and emergencies. It is designed with space for you to add information related to your practice. By working through each of the sections and adding information related to your practice, you will be developing a plan for your practice.

As you go through this guide and you find you are not ready to work on a section related to a particular issue, set it aside, move on to the next issue, and return to the skipped section later. Remember, the planning process is just as important as putting plan details down on paper.

Planning should be a collaborative effort with practice staff. Share the plan with staff, seek input, practice the plan and make sure everyone knows and understands their roles in carrying out the disaster plan.

A plan is not meant to be perfect and should be a living document, reviewed, refined, and updated regularly. Remember, it is the planning process that will help you fine-tune for your practice's needs.

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I. Risks

a. Risks to Your Practice

What types of emergency events are likely to affect your practice? Write down and rank these risks:

i. Manmade Types

- Utility Service Disruption (*Electric, Gas, Water, Sewer*)
- Problems with Heating, Cooling & Ventilation Systems (HVAC)
- Fire
- Animal Escape
- Disruption of Access to Facility (*Road Closures*)
- Vandalism/Burglary
- Hazardous Materials Situation - *Identify nearby highways, railroad tracks and facilities using/storing hazardous materials near your practice*
- Employee Unavailability (*Illness, due to disaster, restricted access to practice*)
- IT Outage (*Computer, Internet, Phone Service*)
- Other _____

ii. Natural Disasters Types

- Flooding
- Earthquake
- Landslide/Mudslide/Avalanche or Other Geophysical Disaster
- Hurricane
- Blizzard/Ice Storm
- Tornado
- Other Severe Storm
- Tsunami
- Wildfire
- Other _____

b. Risks to People

- Practice Staff
- Clients
- General Public
- Other _____

c. Risks to Property

- Practice Building
- Technical Equipment (X-ray, Ultrasound, Dental Equipment, Lab Equipment)
- Support Equipment (Refrigerators, Laundry Machines, Computers)
- Supplies (Pharmaceuticals, Merchandise, Other Office Equipment)
- Other _____

d. Risks to Records

Where are these records kept? Who has access to these? Are there back-up copies? How often are records backed up? Where are back-up copies kept? Who is responsible for backing up data?

- Medical Records
- Computer Records (Cyber security – viruses/hacking)
- Client Files (Including credit card or other sensitive information)
- Employee Records
- Vendor Records
- Financial Records
- Other _____

e. Business Services Provided

Your disaster sheltering & evacuation plan should include species of animals care for and the type of care provided. Include information for evacuating and transporting these animals to alternate locations.

- Boarding (Large Animal / Small Animal)
- Hospitalization (Daytime, Overnight)
- Emergency & Critical Care
- Surgery
- Grooming
- Haul-in Service (Large Animal)
- Exotic Animals
- Aquatic Species
- Other _____

f. Identify Clients & Patients

- _____ Employees
- _____ Patients in Your Care
- _____ Agriculture Animals (Poultry, Livestock)
- _____ Working Animals (Police Dogs, Police & Ranch Horses)
- _____ Athlete Animals (Racing Dogs, Competition Horses)
- _____ Private Service Animals (Seeing Eye Dogs)
- _____ Pets
- _____ Wildlife
- _____ Animal Exhibit Facilities (Zoos, Aquariums)
- _____ Veterinary Schools with Teaching Animals
- _____ Auction Barns
- _____ Performing Animals
- _____ Other _____

II. Goals

Add measurable goals and timeframes (e.g. ensuring safety of all boarded animals after an event within 1 hr. of event)

- a. Practice Goals before an Emergency (e.g. Hold emergency drill with all staff by December 31)

- b. Practice Goals during an Emergency (e.g. Contact all clients of patients in your care within 6 hrs. of event)

- c. Practice Goals after an Emergency (e.g. Resume normal operations within 6 months of event)

III. State & Local Preparedness & Response Resources

There are many emergency management resources available. Assess what is available in your community and build relationships and protocols that make sense for your practice.

- a. Identify Local Emergency Management Agencies

- Name of Agency / Organization

- Phone Number / After-Hours Number

- Contact Person Name, Phone Number and Email Address

- Sheriff / Police Department

- Fire Department

- Other

b. Plans to Meet with Local Emergency Management Organizations

- I have not planned this, but I will by the beginning of next month
- On January 10 and July 10 each year
- Once every year
- Other _____

c. Information to know about Local Emergency Management

How are businesses and the public notified of emergencies? What triggers an evacuation order? How are businesses and the public notified of evacuation orders?

d. Information Emergency Management Needs to Know about Your Practice

Are drugs or other items on the premises that may be a threat to public safety and/or a target for looters?
Are there hazardous materials on-site (chemicals, radiation hazards, flammable materials, explosion hazards such as oxygen tanks, etc.)?

e. Assisting Community Disaster Planning & Response

Does your staff have expertise in handling large or dangerous animals? Can you provide disaster animal sheltering and veterinary care?

f. Local and/or State Agencies that have Authority over Issues Affecting Your Practice

Identify which area(s) each agency has jurisdiction over. Note: This information will vary depending on your jurisdiction.

- County Animal Control
- City or Town Animal Control
- County Emergency Management Agency
- Tribal Authorities
- State Emergency Management Agency
- State Medical and Veterinary Licensing Boards
- State Department of Agriculture
- Public Health Agency (Local and State)
- State Natural Resources and Wildlife Agency
- Public Safety
- Law Enforcement
- Environmental and/or Occupational Health & Safety

g. Local Organizations/Groups Involved in Disaster Animal Management

- Animal-Related, Non-Governmental Organizations (animal rescue groups, animal shelters, animal welfare and humane organizations)
- Volunteer Organizations
- Equine Organizations
- Animal Control Officers
- Pet Stores and Other Retailers
- County or State Animal Response Teams (C/SARTS)
- State and Local Veterinary Response Organizations (VMRC, MRC, etc.)
- Private Animal Shelters
- Local First Responders (Law Enforcement, Fire Control, Search & Rescue)
- Veterinarians and State or Local Veterinary Medical Associations
- Kennels
- Farm or Ranch Staff
- Pet Groomers
- Breeder's Clubs
- Livestock Organizations

h. Identify Sources of Equipment & Supplies

Identify sources of equipment & supplies that may be needed in a disaster. Include names, contact information, account numbers, etc.

- Retailers

- Animal Shelters

- Veterinarians & Animal Hospitals

- Animal or Agriculture Laboratory Facilities

- Zoos & Animal Sanctuaries

- Boarding Kennels

- Farms

- Veterinary Medical & Veterinary Technician Schools

- Veterinary Supply Companies

- Other

i. Community Locations Used for an Emergency Animal Shelter

- Schools
- Hotels
- Fairgrounds
- Equine Facilities
- Racetracks & Other Large Outdoor Venues
- Warehouses
- Large Parking Lots
- Farms or Ranches

j. Finding Emergency Management Information in Your Community

- Television
- Radio
- Local Ham Radio Clubs
- Centrally Located Community Bulletin Boards
- Churches
- Community Groups or Networks
- Reverse 9-1-1
- Email or Social Media
- Newspapers

k. Identify Community Mutual Assistance Programs

- Neighboring Cities or Towns
- Counties or States
- Industry Groups (Animal Feed Industry, etc.)
- Professional Associations (Cattlemen's Association, etc.)
- A Similar Practice(s) that will Host your Animals in an Emergency

IV. Business Insurance for the Practice

a. Priorities to Keep Your Business Operating after a Disaster

How will you pay staff and bills while repairs are being made? What hazards do you want to be insured against?

b. Discussing Priorities with Your Insurance Agent/Broker

Have you recently discussed your specific priorities with your insurance agent or broker?

c. Insurance Coverage Needed for Functions on Your Priority List

Are writing paychecks and purchasing supplies an immediate need following an event? Will you need funds advanced?

d. Date of Last Insurance Coverage Review

e. Contact Information for Insurance Agent & Claims Office

f. Insured Business Assets & their Value

What is the value of your insured assets? Do you know how to calculate value for insurance purposes? Is coverage for replacement cost or actual value? Do you know the difference between replacement cost vs. actual value?

g. After Catastrophic Loss

Would you rebuild your practice or relocate?

h. Current Inventory of Equipment

Include photos or video of equipment, model numbers, serial numbers, etc. for all items.

i. Inventory of Supplies & Merchandise

How often is this reviewed? Where is this information kept? Is it on-site or off-site?

j. Submitting Insurance Claim

Do you know how to submit an insurance claim? Have you discussed how to prepare the best possible claim with your insurance agent or broker?

III. Achieving Goals

a. Identify Practice Personnel & Expectations

- Who are the key practice personnel and your expectations of them?
 - Practice Manager should send communications to clients.
 - Bookkeeper should issue paychecks and pay bills.
- Are staff members cross-trained in practice functions for redundancy?
- Do you have emergency numbers for everyone on staff?
 - Include an alternate phone number and email address
 - Where is this list kept?
 - Is this list accessible outside of the office?

b. Create Incident Command System (ICS)

Create a Chart of Responsibilities During an Emergency.

- Identify the Chain of Command
- Train Employees to their Roles
- Cross Train Employees on Different Roles

c. Identify Clients

- Clients with Patients in your Care
- Clients Needing Time-Sensitive Follow-Up
- Clients with Patients Scheduled to be in within a Week of the Disaster
- Clients whom Expect you to Perform Consulting Services (Research Facility, Petting Zoo, etc.)

d. Trigger the Plan

Examples are when a flood warning is issued, the power is interrupted for more than 4 hours or when the practice manager alerts all employees.

- Who Initiates the Plan?

- How is Staff Notified?

- Who Gives the “All Clear”?

- Contact Information for Staff (Who they can call to notify of their situation)

e. Action Plan

- i. Identify Top 5 Essential Functions for Your Practice
Employee Safety and Patient Safety, etc.

- ii. Achieve Essential Functions during a Disruption
Redundancy in staff, Perform functions remotely like issuing paychecks, Postpone, etc.

- iii. Alternate Locations, Emergency Kit & Supplies
Similar practice with partnership for mutual disaster assistance, Alternate office space to set up a temporary practice, etc.

- iv. Evacuation Destination for Your Practice Staff
Light pole in the front of the building, Fire house on X Street.

f. Evacuation Plan for Your Practice

- Transport Vehicle
- Housing / Caging
- Veterinary Care
- Husbandry Needs (Food, Water)
- Environmental Conditions (Temperature, Ventilation, Lighting)
- Staffing
- Animal Identification

g. Shelter-in-Place Instructions

- Transportation Equipment / Caging
- Veterinary Care
- Husbandry Needs (Food, Water)
- Environmental Conditions (Temperature, Ventilation, Lighting)
- Staffing
- Animal Identification

h. Preparing Your Practice

i. Training

- _____ New Employee Orientation
- _____ Everyone's Responsibility is Clear and this Information is Shared
- _____ Train Existing Employees
- _____ Contract with a Trainer
- _____ Other _____

ii. Exercise

- Emergency Drill Schedule

- Document the Drill, Find and Record Gaps to Address Later

iii. Ongoing Improvement

- Schedule to Update Lists of Needs, Resources and Contacts
- Schedule to Review Emergency Procedures with Staff
- Adjust Practice Procedures to Meet your Readiness Goals (Change Employee Training, etc.)
- Other _____

IV. Resources

These resources can assist you in developing a disaster plan for your practice.

- a. American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)
 - AVMA Emergency Preparedness & Response Guide
 - Disaster Preparedness for Veterinary Practices
 - Emergency Contact Cards for Animals
 - Saving the Whole Family Booklet (English or Spanish)

- b. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
FEMA: Emergency Management Institute
 - IS-10 Animals in Disaster: Module A: Awareness & Preparedness
 - IS-11: Animals in Disaster: Module B: Community Planning
 - IS-111: Livestock in Disasters
 - IS-100.b: Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS-100

- c. Books
 - Heath, S.E. Animal Management in Disasters. Mosby, Inc., St. Louis, Mo.
 - Wingfield, W. and Palmer, S. Veterinary Disaster Response. Wiley-Blackwell.

- d. Risk Assessment
 - Emergency Preparedness and Response: Preparing and Responding to Specific Hazards (CDC)
 - Natural Hazards (USGS)
 - Plan for Your Risks (FEMA)
 - Storm Ready: Awareness Materials (NOAA)

- e. Resources for Veterinary Practices
 - Ready.gov: Be Informed
 - Business Continuity Plan: Information & Tools for Developing a Business Continuity Plan
 - Business Risk Assessment
 - Creating Emergency Plans for Businesses
 - Insurance Coverage Review Worksheet
 - Ready Business Mentoring Guide: Preparing Small Businesses for Emergencies
 - Resources & Publications: Downloadable Publications and Forms Useful for Developing Business Emergency Plans
 - National Flood Insurance Program: Flood Smart
 - U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Health & Safety Administration (OSHA): How to Plan for Workplace Emergencies & Evacuations

- f. Disaster Planning & Personal Preparedness
 - ALL HAZARDS: Resources to help rural communities prepare for disasters and other hazards (CFSPH)
 - Disaster Management Resource Center -- Animals in Disaster (Dept. Health & Human Services)
 - Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (FEMA)
 - Flood Insurance for Homeowners and Renters (FEMA)
 - Pet Evacuation, Evacuation Pets, Pet Friendly Emergency Shelters
 - Pet Friendly Hotels: Find a Pet Friendly Hotel and Lodging for the Pet Friendly Family
 - Pet Travel Center
 - Pets Welcome (Travel Information)
 - Plan and Prepare (American Red Cross)
 - Protect Your Pets in an Emergency (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
 - Ready.gov (FEMA)
 - o Be Informed
 - o Make a Plan
 - o Caring for Animals
 - o Build a Kit
 - 72 hour preparation (San Francisco City and County)

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