

Emergency Preparedness Tips for Farm Operations

Preparedness starts before the threat is at your gate. Small actions now—clearing brush, securing water, updating/creating plans and communicating your needs should they arise will make responding manageable.

Reduce Fire Risk on Farm

- Create defensible space – Maintain a 10–30 m fuel-reduction zone around barns, fuel storage, and other key infrastructure by mowing, grazing, or clearing brush.
- Maintain firebreaks – Disc or mow firebreaks around crop fields and woodlots, especially near road access points. A single row of firebreak can make enough difference to assist firefighters in getting a crop fire under control and spreading further.
- Keep your disc harrows ready to go when harvesting
- Inspect & maintain equipment – Check for faulty exhausts, ensure spark arresters are in place, and clean debris from combines, balers, and tractors before use.
- Safe refueling – Refuel in cleared areas, away from dry vegetation; keep spill kits on-hand.
- Have suppression tools ready – Keep water tanks, hoses, shovels, fire extinguishers, and functioning pumps accessible at all times during operations.

Manage Water Resources Proactively

- Prioritize water use – Focus available water on highest-value crops/livestock.
- Check storage – Inspect ponds, tanks, and cisterns; repair leaks and remove debris from intakes.
- Increase efficiency – Use drip or targeted irrigation where possible; water at cooler times of day to reduce evaporation.
- Prepare for shortage logistics – Identify alternate water sources (municipal fill stations, neighbours, shared wells) and transport options.
- Covering/sheltering watering troughs for livestock can reduce evaporation by up to 70%.

Safeguard Livestock

- Evacuation & shelter plans – Pre-plan relocation sites (fairgrounds, neighbouring barns) and transportation routes.
- Water & feed reserves – Maintain 72 hrs+ of feed and water on-site in case of transport or supply chain disruption.
- Smoke exposure – If wildfire smoke increases, reduce animal exertion, provide shade, and protect feed/water from ash.

Prepare for Flash Flood or Heavy Rain After Drought

- Inspect drainage – Clear ditches, culverts, and field drains before forecasted heavy rain.
- Secure chemicals & fuel – Move containers above potential flood lines; ensure tanks are anchored.
- Protect livestock & equipment – Identify high-ground shelter and relocate early if flooding risk rises.

Build Your Farm Emergency Kit

- Contact list (family, staff, vets, suppliers, neighbours, EMO).
- Hard copies of farm maps (water sources, gates, access routes).
- First aid kits (human & animal).
- PPE (masks for smoke, gloves, eye protection).
- Battery-powered radios, chargers, flashlights.
- Spare parts and essential tools.
- “Go bag” for family and staff living on farm in case of evacuation notice.

Stay Informed & Connected

- Monitor official Burn Restrictions Map and Fire Weather Index (NS DNRR).
- Sign up for Alertable and NSDEM notifications.
- Communicate with your local fire department about on-farm water access points and hazards.
- Keep neighbours and sector groups updated on conditions and challenges.