

Santa Cruz County Equine Evacuation Unit

Who we are

Santa Cruz County Equine Evacuation Unit is a group of over 200 volunteers who are experienced horse handlers, and have access to horse trailers. We operate under the auspices of the Santa Cruz Office of Emergency Services, under the direction of Santa Cruz County Animal Services and are all certified Disaster Workers in Santa Cruz County.

How we are organized

We are organized with three coordinators, 9 geographic area team leaders, and a number of other members who cover logistics, ham operations, EOC, Finance and Staging Area Management. In addition to these members of our leadership team, we have over 200 team members who drive or help with trailer evacuations.

What we do

When activated by the Santa Cruz Office of Emergency Services, we are available to assist in equine evacuation efforts in emergencies and special circumstances.

How do we operate

We are organized into area teams, with designated team leaders. These teams have horse handlers and horse trailers. We work under the direction of County Animal Services and the incident command (fire/sheriff/police, etc) on site to evacuate horses and where possible other large domestic animals from designated evacuation areas and take them to County authorized holding facilities.

When are we activated

We can be activated in case of fire, flood, earthquake, or other disaster or major emergency event with horses involved through the Office of Emergency Services, working in conjunction with Santa Cruz County Animal Services.

When an event occurs

Initial contact might occur differently for each event.

It might come from the news, members in the horse community, team members, animal services or OES. If the information comes from anyone other than AS or OES, we must verify the need for our services with one of those entities. If an event seems to warrant it, we generally first go to the ALERT stage.

Alert - At that point, the EOC Liaison will contact the team leaders and Coordinators and give them an alert.

Team leaders should poll their members, find out primary and secondary (back-up) availability, and get back to the EOC Liaison and let them know what they can provide in terms of resources both in terms of trailers and care providers for sheltered horses.

For an alert, we ask team members to hook up their trailers and pack any necessary items and prepare to go to a staging area **IF** we are activated. At this time take care of personal animals and family needs. If a team member is not able to be activated for any reason, they must let their team leader know. Just because we are on alert, does not mean we will be activated. It is important for everyone to wait to be activated to proceed to a staging area or evacuation site. Not everyone is activated for every event, or they may be activated later for relief.

Activated - **IF** we are activated, we are activated by the Office of Emergency Services or Animal Services. At that time the EE Coordinators and SAM's (Staging Area Managers) work with Animal Services to determine the number of trailers needed for initial deployment, the staging area, and the location where animals will be sheltered. EE Coordinators will then contact the team leaders as appropriate to the event, provide what ever information now available, find out what they have available and ask them to deploy their teams as appropriate to the situation

Once we are activated, one of the EE Coordinators, or their designee, will go to the OES Emergency Operations Center (EOC), where they will have direct access to fire, law enforcement and other emergency

services and will be routing information between all agencies, evac teams and individuals.

Depending on the need and location, not all team leaders will necessarily be contacted initially. This information will come from Animal Services.

We will then reevaluate at intervals the need for more trailers, backups, more resources, shelter needs, including feed, locations and volunteers.

Animal Services will determine how late and how long we will be activated to evacuate animals.

Animal Services will determine when we change from evacuation to care and assistance mode, if our folks are available to assist with that.

Deactivate - The Office of Emergency Services will decide when the event is deactivated. Animal Services will work with owners to determine when animals will be sent home, or to alternative, longer term care locations.

What you can do

First and foremost, BE PREPARED!!!!*

Planning for Emergencies

Plan for your animals as well as yourself in case of emergencies. There is no one size fits all plan, the important thing is that you have a plan that works for you.

You need to realize that depending on circumstances, particularly if you live up a narrow mountain road, we may not be allowed in to do evacuations if the fire service or police determine that it is not appropriate to send us in. You need to be prepared to evacuate your own animals.

DO NOT TURN THEM LOOSE. If you are close enough to let them go, lead them out. Horses will return to burning barns and if they are out on the road, can interfere with emergency vehicles, or cause accidents for which you are liable.

Food and Shelter

Be sure you have adequate food, water and medicine on hand for at least three days for humans and animals

Emergency access routes

Plan several escape routes in case of fire, flood or landslide. If your road is too narrow or steep for a horse trailer to turn around, or to safely access your property, you will need to lead your horse to an accessible location. If you are located in a difficult area to access, contact the evacuation team leader for your area to arrange for a safe location to meet you and pick up your horses.

Keep your property fire safe

>>>> Be sure your property is as fire safe as possible by keeping adequate vegetation clearance (30-100 feet) around any structures.

Teach your horse to load

Teach your horse to trailer load. Horses who will not load into a horse trailer will not be able to be evacuated.

Safety tips for barns and boarding facilities

Have an evacuation plan and review it with your boarders.

Do not allow smoking in barns, hay or bedding storage areas, or on trails on your property.

Have water, ladders, and fire extinguishers available at critical locations on your property.

Check your electrical wiring to be sure it is up to code.

Electric lights, heaters, etc., should have protective cages to keep the hot elements from igniting fuel sources if they are broken or tipped over.

You are ultimately the one responsible for the well-being of the animals in your care.

If your horse is evacuated

If your horse(s) are taken to a temporary evacuation site, please claim them as soon as you can. In no case, should your horse be unclaimed for more than 36 hours. Horses must be cared for by their owners while they are at the evacuation facility.