

Animal Care Tech Note

Development Guide: Contingency Plans for Emergencies

As a dealer, exhibitor, research facility, intermediate handler, animal transporter, or other entity regulated under the Animal Welfare Act, you are required to make a contingency plan. This plan describes what you will do to safeguard your animals during emergencies or disasters. Use this tech note to help guide the development of your contingency plan.

Contingency Plan Basics

- There is no one-size-fits-all contingency plan. You'll need to create a plan that addresses your facility's unique needs in different emergencies.
- Your contingency plan should cover all animals in your main facility and all holding facilities, including alternate locations you may use during an evacuation.
- Any licensee or registrant who transports animals or works as an intermediate handler must also develop a contingency plan for emergencies that can occur during the transport process or while temporarily holding animals.
- Your employees should be aware of your facility's contingency plan and trained to carry out their designated roles and responsibilities.
- You must review your plan and document any updates at least annually. If you experience personnel changes or other changes, you should review your plan more often to keep it up to date.

What To Consider When Planning for Contingencies

Your contingency plan must address four things: **when** you will activate your plan, **what** actions you will take, **who** is responsible for taking those actions, and **how** you will accomplish them. Use the information below to guide your contingency planning.

When Will You Activate Your Plan?

Emergencies are not limited to natural disasters. They can also include local events such as a fire, power outage, illness or death of key personnel, or other unexpected situation that interrupts normal animal care activities.



Carefully consider and document the types of emergencies that could affect your area or your facility. Some possible emergencies include:

- Wildfires, earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, or avalanches
- Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, blizzards, ice storms, or extreme heat and humidity
- Power outages; faulty wiring, heating, ventilation, or air conditioning systems in buildings or transport vehicles; or building fires
- Water or feed supply disruptions
- Road closures that impact access to your facility or limit animal transport, or hazardous materials situations
- Human or animal disease outbreak
- Intentional attacks on your facility, animals, or personnel
- Animal escape

What Actions Will You Take?

Your contingency plan must document the actions you'll take in response to the emergency situations that could affect your operation. For example, in some situations, you may need to evacuate your animals and employees. In other circumstances, you may decide that sheltering in place is the safest option. Use the information on the next page to consider what you might do in each situation.



Sheltering in Place

If you must shelter in place, consider how you will:

- Access veterinary care
- Feed, water, and clean all animals
- Provide food, water, and housing for staff
- Maintain adequate environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, ventilation, lighting)
- Temporarily identify animals in the event of an escape
- Keep records accessible

Evacuating

If you must evacuate, you'll need to decide not only where you will relocate animals, but also how you will:

- Transport animals, including types and quantities of vehicle(s), equipment, and crates needed
- Care for animals during transport and at the alternate location(s) (e.g., food, water, cleaning)
- Access veterinary care
- Ensure adequate environmental conditions during transport and at alternate location(s)
- Care for staff during transport and at alternate location(s)
- Temporarily identify animals in the event of an escape
- Move records to the alternate location(s)

Animal Escapes

As you think through different scenarios, consider how you will prevent and respond to potential animal escapes during an emergency, which can become their own emergency. Facilities with dangerous animals should contact local public safety and emergency management officials to discuss and document plans regarding animal darting, use of secondary barriers, human and animal safety protocols, and capturing escaped animals.

Who Will Be Responsible for Taking Specific Actions?

In an emergency, it's critical that you and your staff know your roles and responsibilities. By assigning tasks to staff as part of the contingency planning process and establishing clear authority and lines of communication, you can streamline your response during an emergency.

- Determine who has the authority to make key decisions.
- Identify who is responsible for each task listed in your plan. Assign tasks to positions rather than people to ensure your plan remains accurate if staff change.
- Develop a contact list, distribute it to everyone involved in the plan, and keep it up to date.
- Decide which methods you'll use to maintain communication in an emergency.
- Make sure everyone is properly trained in their responsibilities, knows where to find everything they will need, and understands how to use it.
- If staff change or roles within your staff change, make sure everyone is notified.

How Will You Carry Out Your Plan?

As you develop your contingency plan, consider:

- What equipment, materials, and means you'll need to carry out the actions in your plan
- How you'll obtain equipment during an emergency if it's not on hand
- Whether staff must be certified or receive specialized training to use the equipment

Also, if you plan to house animals at another facility, make sure the facility is willing and able to receive your animals.

Putting It All Together

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has an [optional form \(APHIS Form 7093\)](#) that you can download and use when developing and documenting your contingency plan. APHIS' Animal Care inspectors are also available to help you develop or review plans, as needed.

For More Information

You can find information about contingency planning in the following sections of the Animal Welfare Act (9 CFR Part 2): [Subpart C, § 2.38\(i\)\(4\)](#); [Subpart H, § 2.102\(a\)\(4\) and \(b\)\(3\)](#); and [Subpart I, § 2.134](#). Go to ecfr.gov and search "9 CFR 2." For information on the contingency planning rule, visit www.aphis.usda.gov and search "contingency planning rule."

To contact APHIS' Animal Care program, call (970) 494-7478 or email animalcare@usda.gov.