Be aware – be prepared

PART ONE OF A SERIES

Michigan farmers must manage a wide variety of naturally occurring and potentially man-made hazards while producing the abundant and safe food supply that we all enjoy.

A quick look at recent real-world examples that have hit Michigan farmers tells us that success in the farming business today means successfully navigating a wide range of naturally occurring and man-made emergencies.

For example in the spring of 2002, the Upper Peninsula experienced record flood damage with 29 major bridge failures and more than 100 road culvert washouts. The economic impact was $35 million.

In another example, more than 30 feeder calves died and many others become sick when the valve on a nearby anhydrous ammonia tank was left open by a thief attempting to steal to make methamphetamine.

Also, more than 70 calves were stolen from Elsie area dairy farms in Clinton County in 2005.

Need more examples? In 1996, a disgruntled worker dumped chlordane in beef fat, subsequently used in feed sent to more than 4,000 farms in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois. More than 4,000 tons of feed and 500,000 pounds of fat, with an estimated value of $4 million, had to be destroyed.

One last example: Approximately 20,000 retail food establishments in southeastern Michigan were without power or water during the blackout of August 2003, resulting in the loss of an estimated $105 million of retail food.

How would we in Michigan have fared if we faced a similar challenge? Michigan agriculture is a precious resource that we must work together to protect. Most of us know that agriculture is Michigan's second-largest industry, but many do not know that **agricultural businesses employ nearly one million people.** The interconnected nature of food and agricultural supply chains creates the potential for even single incidents to cause significant ripple effects that threaten not only crops, animals, and the food supply, but also the economic viability of entire communities.

Michigan leaders from government, agricultural and food industries, and universities have been working together since 2004 to identify practical steps to help farmers prepare for potential threats. This group is now kicking off an informational **"Be Aware Be Prepared" campaign to help producers better protect their crops, animals, the foods they produce, their economic livelihood, and the food supply.** The purpose of this campaign is not to make us feel less secure, but to encourage us all to be more aware, take action to help prevent hazards, and be better prepared to deal with any hazard should one occur.

Monthly articles will appear in *Michigan Farm News* over the next six months, focusing on practical strategies that address the prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery phases of emergency management. Each article will share lessons learned and resources available to assist producers. This is a joint effort among leaders from Michigan's food and agricultural industries, government agencies, and universities.

Contributors: Michigan Department of Community Health: Dr. Melinda Wilkins, Lori Simon; Michigan Department of Agriculture: Kevin Kirk, Dr. John Tilden, Susan Esser, Siobhan Kent, Dr. Steven Halstead, Dr. Nancy Frank, Kenneth Rauscher; Michigan State University: Dr. Dan Grooms, Ted Ferris, Dean Ross, Dr. Mark Hansen, Dr. Ray Hammerschmidt; Michigan Farm Bureau: Ernie Birchmeier, Paul W. Jackson.

See page 21 for a related article about infectious disease.

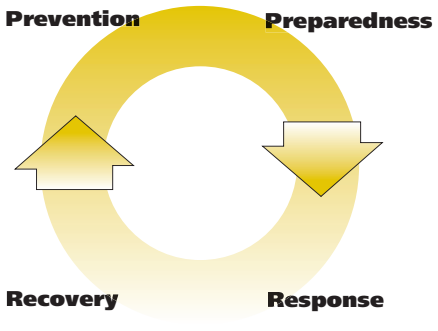
For more information...

- **http://www.michigan.gov/msp – Michigan's Emergency Management Division is housed with the Michigan State Police.**
- **http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases – (State of Michigan central site for many human and animal disease issues).**
- **http://www.fema.gov – Federal Emergency Management Agency**
- **http://www.ready.gov – U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, site for individuals and businesses**
- **http://www.cdc.gov – Centers for Disease Control**

Control risks through the all-hazards cycle

While we cannot prevent all emergencies, good planning and communication can reduce their impact on our lives, businesses and the economy of our local communities. Emergency management experts recommend controlling risks through a comprehensive cycle of "all-hazards" actions, including:

The Emergency Management Cycle



Standard Terminology

- **Prevention** – what you can do now to minimize the chance and impact of an incident.
- **Preparedness** – what you plan to do for what you cannot prevent in a cost-effective manner – your plan if an incident occurs.
- **Response** – rapidly identifying and controlling incidents that do occur.
- **Recovery** – restoring critical functions and returning to normal operations.

"All-hazards" emergency management means using proven principles to address the full range of emergencies that farmers may encounter. By developing an "all-hazards" strategy, farmers can invest their limited time and capital in strategies that address multiple potential hazards at once.

Examples of an "all-hazards" strategy include being prepared for a power outage regardless of the cause; or implementing biosecurity protocols to reduce the risk of common infectious diseases, foreign animal diseases or intentional acts of agroterrorism. Farm self-assessments are important to help identify those particular higher probability threats that justify additional specific actions – taking steps to prevent anhydrous ammonia theft, for example.

MICHIGAN AGRICULTURE

Protect Michigan's Food
from the Farm to the Family

- **Secure and light your facilities**
- **Implement biosecurity measures**
- **Know your visitors and watch traffic flow**
- **Report suspicious activities**

BE AWARE

- **Unusual sickness, animal and human**
- **Unexpected spraying activities**
- **Unusual or suspicious packages**
- **Unauthorized individuals**
- **Signs of break-in**
- **Any suspicious activity**

BE PREPARED

Call 911 for Emergencies and acts in progress

Unusual animal health and food or milk contamination issues should be reported immediately to your veterinarian and /or the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) 24/7 emergency line: (517) 373-0440. During normal business hours call: 1-800-292-3939.

Other Emergency Phone Numbers

Sheriff:_____ State Police:_____

Veterinarian:_____ Co. Health Dept.:_____

MSU Extension: _____ Other: _____

Ag Pollution (spill): 1-800-405-0101 Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

Brought to you by Michigan's Animal Industry partners

This all-weather placard has been developed to communicate key information at a glance. The placard summarizes simple steps that can be taken to better protect farm operations and identify suspicious events for which farmers and farm employees should be aware. The placard includes spaces to write emergency contact information. It is printed on heavy-duty plastic for durability, so it can be prominently displayed in barns, milk houses and machine sheds as an ongoing reminder for farm employees. Get these placards free at MDA offices, MSU Extension offices or from milk inspectors who intend to leave them with farms after inspections.

What did we learn about emergency preparedness from Katrina?

When Hurricane Katrina devastated a wide area of the Gulf Coast, followed closely by two other nasty storms, people in the United States learned a great deal about emergency preparedness, and the news wasn't good.

But for Michigan's farmers watching from afar, there were lessons to be learned that exceeded the shock of the devastation and the anger over human suffering.

Losses to agriculture seemed to go mostly unnoticed by the mainstream media, but they were equally devastating. Dairy cows went weeks without being milked, and thousands of other animals were stranded without food or clean water. USDA estimates hurricane-related losses to be nearly $900 million with short-term livestock production losses near $30 million. Millions of chickens were killed, an estimated 10,000 cattle were lost and dairy producers who managed to milk their animals discarded an estimated $3 million worth of milk due to lost electricity on farms and at dairy processing plants. Dairy herds impacted by the storm will likely face a period of reduced productivity.

But the tragedy didn't end there.

The storm increased fuel and shipping costs, and limited shipping options available to producers. The transportation bottleneck on the Mississippi caused grain prices to fall at river terminal markets. The already tight supply of rail cars was further tightened, leaving Michigan with potential storage problems as elevators struggled to ship grain to market.

So what have we learned in Michigan that will help us deal with an emergency when it occurs? Here are just a few key points:

- **Preparation is key**. No one can react calmly and efficiently in an emergency if there's no plan. Emergency plans should be produced as soon as possible and periodically tested to make sure they work.
- **All emergencies begin as local emergencies**. Therefore, it's crucial to establish effective working relationships with government emergency managers and emergency responders before a crisis. Know who they are and keep their contact information where everyone of the farm can find it quickly. Use the placard reproduced on this page. The waterproof, orange placards can be obtained free at Michigan Department of Agriculture offices, Michigan State University Extension offices, Extension winter meetings or elsewhere. For more information, call Ernie Birchmeier at (800) 292-2680, ext. 2024.
- **Federal resources will not be available** in the short term. In isolated agricultural areas, it may take far longer than expected to get help. Priorities will be on centers of the greatest human population, so farmers may be on their own for extended periods.
- **Loss of communication** and transportation systems leads to potentially prolonged isolation-Prepare to survive without outside assistance for at least three to five days.
- **Coordination** of response activities involving multiple government agencies and the private sector remains a problem. Be patient. As Katrina demonstrated, bureaucracies tend to be even less efficient in times of crisis.