

Tips & Tools

- Have ABC rated fire extinguishers available in your barn, truck, trailer and in out buildings. Periodically check the extinguisher to ensure it is fully charged.
- Annually review your insurance coverage to ensure it is adequate and current.
- Consider installing lightening rods, alarms and sprinkler systems.
- Store hay, straw and shavings in a separate building.
- Make sure your horses/animals cannot reach electric cords or light bulbs and periodically clean dust from light bulbs.
- Paint you main power panel a fluorescent color and mark "POWER" so that responders can quickly locate shut offs.
- Post emergency numbers in a visible and accessible place – especially near phones. Post your address as well in case another person is making the emergency call.
- Make contact with your local fire department and make sure they have a copy of your farm layout.
- Make sure your address and farm entrance are clearly visible from the road so that first responders can find you.
- Never park farm vehicles in or near barns due to hear or sparks from engines.
- Always check hay for moisture – bales can spontaneously combust.
- Never have manure pikes close to barns – manure piles can spontaneously combust.
- In winter always clear enough snow for emergency vehicles to access the barn.

Additional Resources

This brochure is meant as a guideline only. We strongly recommend that you consult with your local fire marshal for additional information. You may also find the resources below to be helpful in your quest to make your barn safe.

National Association of State Fire Marshals
www.firemarshals.org

Virginia State Fire Marshal
www.dhcd.virginia.gov/StateFireMarshalsOffice (804) 371-7090

Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
www.vvma.org (800) 937-8862

National Fire Protection Association
www.nfpa.org (617)770-3300

Underwriter's Laboratory www.ul.com
(847) 272-8800

National Safety Council (NSC) www.nsc.org
(630) 285-1121

Virginia Department of Agriculture
www.vdacs.virginia.gov (804) 786-2373

**Membership dues made this brochure possible. Please consider joining the VHC so that we may continue to serve the industry.

***Information courtesy of the Connecticut Horse Council.

Barn Fire Prevention



VIRGINIA
HORSE COUNCIL

The Virginia Horse Council
368 Litton Reaves (0306)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
www.virginiahorsecouncil.org
Toll Free Number
1-888-HORSEVA (888-457-7382)
Fax 1-540-231-3713

Most people have heard the legend of Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicking over the lantern and not only burning down the barn but a large portion of the city of Chicago in 1871. Since Virginia is home to a large number of horses, the Virginia Horse Council would like to share fire prevention information to help keep our member safe. Barn fires most often occur in the winter months, but can happen in any season and at any time. No matter what the source, fires are terrifying and disastrous.

Prevention

Preventive measure cannot be stressed enough. You should make every effort to make your barn safe. Place fire extinguishers at every entrance, in every vehicle, and in all surrounding outbuildings. Always read the labels to ensure they are properly rated for the type of building and conditions you have. Generally, an ABC rated extinguisher will be appropriate for barns. Check them periodically to see they are fully charged, at the same time giving them a shake to loosen the chemicals inside. Contact your local fire department to recharge if needed. Replace any extinguisher that is not holding a charge. Read the directions on their use in advance. You can never have too many extinguishers, placing them every 50 feet in your barn is advisable, most with one at each entrance and on or more in the middle.

Check your insurance policy at least once a year to make sure your coverage is current and adequate for your situation. Call your agent with questions.

Frequently clean out lofts and tack rooms to remove cobwebs, hay/chaff and dust, as all are flammable. Clean dust off of light fixtures and bulbs as well.

The preceding tasks should be a planned event and not left for when you "remember" to do them. Schedule a date on your calendar that you can easily remember, such as the first of each month.

In the winter, make sure you clear a wide enough path for emergency vehicles if you have snowfall. Also clear out hydrants and around gates and doors. You should never leave snow partially blocking a sliding door.

Post "NO SMOKING" signs in all buildings and strictly enforce the rule. People may not like it, but the alternative may be to experience the destruction of your barn because of a careless cigarette.

Post all emergency numbers, including vets, fire department, police and owner near phones and in accessible places. Also include the farm address since someone who is not the farm owner may have to call for help.

Double check to make certain your farm address and entrance are visible from the road so emergency vehicle will not waste valuable time searching for the barn.

Have an emergency evacuation plan in place and know where you will put the horses when you have removed them from the barn. Horses should never be allowed to run loose during a fire as they may run back in to the burning barn or out in to the road where they can be struck by vehicles. Consider keeping spare halter and ropes in an identified place, accessible to fire personnel before they enter the barn.

Make sure neighbors have your phone number in case they see something you don't. Also make sure neighbors have an idea of your emergency plans should a fire or other situation erupt.

Use a thermometer to determine temperature of baled hay. Hay that is moist due to improper baling can generate its own heat and spontaneously combust! Check to see that the center of the bales remain below 130 degrees Fahrenheit.

During a Fire

Call for help immediately; do not delay by trying to rescue horses first. Never attempt to enter any building that is engulfed in flames, to do so risks not only your life but the lives of firefighters who try to save you.

If you detect smoke in a hay pile or bale, do NOT attempt to move it. If you disturb the smoldering hay you may inadvertently expose the fire to oxygen which will cause it to flash. Call the fire department and evacuate.

When possible, only move one horse at a time and place them into paddocks or secured areas that can be quickly accessed but are far enough away from flames. Horses should only be turned loose as an *absolute* last resort.

After a Fire

Even if your horses do not show any visible signs of burns you should always have your veterinarian check them immediately. Lung damage from smoke inhalation will not be obvious at first and can be fatal if left untreated. Also, the stress of the event may cause some horses to colic or go into shock.

Even if you have extinguished a fire yourself, contact the fire department immediately to ensure it has been completely extinguished. Some fires can smolder, only to re-ignite hours later.

Think Safety - Plan and Prepare!