

Episode Title: General Farm Emergency Preparedness

Topic: How Farms Can Prepare for Emergency Events

Episode Summary: This episode focuses on emergency preparedness on the farm. We talked with extension educator and dairy farmer, Emily Krekelberg, about general tips that can help farmers plan for emergency situations. During the episode, we share information on the key pieces of information that should be gathered to construct an emergency action plan that covers weather-related events and other scenarios, such as entrapments or medical emergencies.

Expert: Emily Krekelberg, Minnesota Extension

Episode Quote:

“And just thinking about it and just having the conversation, that itself is going to help you be more prepared.”

– Emily Krekelberg, Extension Educator and Dairy Farmer

Transcript

00:10 E Presnall

Welcome to the *FarmSafe* Podcast brought to you by the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health. In the blink of an eye, an injury can change your life and your farm forever. During each episode, we share first-hand stories and real-life tips for making safer and healthier decisions while on the farm.

00:32 E Presnall

Just like the weather, farm life may be unpredictable, so it's critical to prepare for even the most unexpected scenarios. There are many ways in which farmers can be better prepared for a range of unexpected events that may take place in a farm environment. Let's hear what one farmer from the Minnesota FarmFest is doing to be better prepared.

00:55 Guest Speaker, Minnesota FarmFest

Hey, it's been a dry year, and my family has been preparing by putting fire extinguishers in tractors and combines to prevent field fires and injuries. One thing that you can do is have either fire extinguishers or stuff like that to prevent your fires.

01:15 E Presnall

The dry and windy weather is one example of why livestock and grain farmers should have an emergency plan for their farm. Farming is a dangerous occupation, and now that it is spring, it is an excellent time to do some thinking and some planning. I chatted with Emily Krekelberg about some general ways that farmers can be more prepared for emergencies. Emily is an extension educator from the University of Minnesota, and emergency preparedness is one of several safety and health topics that she focuses on.

01:49 E Presnall

I really want to dive into what emergency preparedness looks like for a farmer and how they can prepare not only for an incident or a major event, like a grain bin explosion, but also for the other side of it, which is weather preparedness. When I say emergency preparedness in a farm environment, what kind of comes to mind? What does that look like?

02:17 E Krekelberg

With emergency preparedness, kind of three different buckets, right? Kind of three different types of situations you should be aware of. One of those situations would be sheltering in place. That would be things like extreme weather. So, depending on where you live, blizzards, hurricanes, anything where it's like we are going to stay on the farm and have no outside access. So that's one type. The other type would be evacuation. Explosion, wildfire, something where you need to go get off of the farm as quickly as possible. And

then the third type would be what I call medical emergency, there is an incident, somebody has been injured, but that could also be things like allergic reactions, heart attacks, any sort of medical emergency for an individual on the farm. A gain, my three kind of categories as we think about how to emergency plan is shelter in place, evacuation and medical emergency. I think breaking it down into those three types is really helpful because some of the base information, things you need to think about is all the same. But then when you kind of separate it by those three, you're able to get just a little deeper into some of those more situation specific details and for me that's really what an emergency plan is about is that when you are in an emergency, and of course our bodies can go into fight or flight, it can be very stressful for us, that we have something we can go to that gives us the general outline, here's the general steps we need to take. It's not going to have all the answers. It's not going to account for every single thing, but it's going to be something that in essence is a resiliency strategy for you. It will keep you focused and kind of help guide you through what you need to do in a time where your mind might be going a little blank.

04:11 E Presnall

You can't possibly plan for every single scenario that may happen, but you also can never be too prepared and so I agree, you know, start with those basics, like emergency action plans and even just starting to think about emergency situations and then, as time goes on, you can build on to those basics that you have.

E Presnall

I want to talk a little bit about documents that should be prepared for any emergency situation and from a farmer's perspective.

04:47 E Krekelberg

Right now, we're kind of starting with the pieces that are the same for all three of those different areas. So, just that standard information that you should have. I remind people put all the things on there that that you would think of, even like the farm's address and in some cases, if you know your farm might be hard to find and this is really particular to like a 911 situation, but if you know the address maybe isn't accurate, do you have the GPS coordinates written down so that you can give that to emergency services instead so they can find you quicker. Kind of the where are we and the what do we have here. Inventory, if you are a farmer with livestock that's going to be a little bit more on there, but kind of that general, this is what we have and also this is where it is. The cattle are in the barn that is located on the northwest side of the farm site, and we store all of our hay in the shed that's on the northeast side.

E Krekelberg

It can be helpful to both just kind of have written down where it is, but also a map. You can go on to Google Maps and zoom in on your location and get the terrain map. And then you can just label it. Here's where this is. Here's where that is, 'cause that's going to be helpful in a lot of different situations. Evacuation, you know where you need to get to first to get animals or other things out of the way. Shelter in place, you kind of know where things are so if you need to create a path or an alternative route to an area you know where you need to go. And then of course, a medical emergency, it can help you kind of pinpoint where you need to direct an ambulance or emergency services.

E Krekelberg

Yeah, kind of the list of what you got, what you're working with, where it is besides just your inventory of you know your assets, crops, cattle, etcetera, livestock, I should say. This is also where, you know you want to know where chemicals are, where explosives are, on a map, especially in some sort of emergency. That can be really helpful to firefighters. Also, things like emergency shutoffs for electricity, for gas, for water, all of those types of things just having them in one spot. Also, this is where I would put your emergency numbers. Depending on what the emergency is, who you need to call first may vary. Obviously 911 is a big one, but also having like the non-emergency number for your Sheriff's Office, for medical emergencies, having doctor's numbers, especially if there is a known medical condition. On that too, I would add, if you know people are on certain medications or again have allergies, if it's something where they have insulin or an EpiPen, where are those things kept, or do we keep an EPI pen in our first aid kit? And where's the first aid kit?

07:40 E Presnall

We know that EMS, they're usually trained to know that medical history and medications, things like that, are typically going to be found at least on a family farm, on the refrigerator. But, when we're talking about emergency preparedness documents, specifically,

maps of the farm, emergency phone numbers, print out a lot. For example, if you have a farm worker in a tractor in one field and there's a tornado, have a map in every single tractor for every field that you may be in and circle on that map where the closest shelter would be. Keep all of the addresses of all the farms in there in case you need to call 911 and give them an exact address. It doesn't have to be just one place where you keep everything. Now, you want to have one central location, but even if you're the farmer, you might know where everything is, what all the addresses are, but if you have hired help or you're on a bigger farm with a lot of farm workers, they might not know. And so, kind of thinking through that. It might look a little different for a family farm versus, you know, a bigger farm.

08:48 E Krekelberg

You're exactly right, Libby. I'm a proponent of like, have the central copy that is in the house or if you have a farm office somewhere on the farm site, but yeah, there's no rule that says you only need one copy available. And making sure that if you are a farm with employees, going through that plan when you hire them. All sorts of things that you can do.

E Krekelberg

So, I kind of got on the emergency services piece that's really vital, but this is also where and again it's going to kind of depend on the type of farm you have. I'm from a dairy farm. Does your milk truck driver need to be contacted? Does your milk guy need to be contacted because they can't get in or there was a fire. If you have livestock, your veterinarian, are animals in distress or injured needing care? It's going to be dependent on what the situation is. Your insurance agent, county emergency services, neighbors, vendors, any sort of consultants or advisors you work with. If you have employees, having emergency contact information for them as well. When people are making their phone number lists, just put down anybody you think you would maybe need to get a hold of.

10:02 E Presnall

Many farmers want to know what they can do to better prepare their farms for severe weather events. While preparing your crops for severe weather can be challenging, there are many possibilities when it comes to livestock preparedness.

10:16 E Krekelberg

As livestock farmers, we have a responsibility to keep our livestock as safe as we can. And you know in emergency situations, there are times when extraordinary measures need to be made. I'm thinking specifically of situations where you need to open the gates. And that is where that map is going to come in handy again.

E Krekelberg

I grew up in an area of Minnesota where we had a lot of tornadoes. That was something that I remember my dad talking to us about. And I mean, I was a kid then. I realize now it was his little emergency plan that he's like, if there's a tornado and you are out in the pasture, when you come back leave the gate open because he didn't want the cows to get stuck somewhere they couldn't get out of or get injured. This is also me just giving a plug to like, the amazing natural instincts of animals. They can get themselves away from danger if they have an opportunity to do that.

11:12 E Krekelberg

You said it at the beginning, Libby. And I want to reiterate being mindful that you need to have some flexibility. You cannot plan for absolutely everything you know. Like we said, just having some of that general information together somewhere central. And just thinking about it and just having the conversation, that in itself is going to help you be more prepared.

11:37 E Presnall

Creating any kind of emergency action plan requires effective communication among anyone living or working on your farm. Prepare lists and maps of all the key locations on your farm, including buildings, inventories, and access routes. For farm inventories, list all livestock, including species, number of each species, and any identifiers like tag numbers; list crop types, including number of acres and any crops stored on the farm; all machinery and equipment, including their serial numbers; and also list hazardous substances, such as fuels, fertilizers and medicines.

E Presnall

A full list of emergency contacts should be readily available to everyone living or working on the farm as well. This list should include numbers for your local emergency services, vet, county emergency management, extension office, and your insurance agent. Also list the contact information for all the businesses that supply services to or for your farm and anyone else who is on the farm regularly and should be alerted if something were to happen on the farm.

12:53 E Presnall

The Farm Emergency Contact File is a form for farmers to put emergency contact phone numbers onto one central form, and then in one central location. The file has a place for local emergency phone numbers, and another place for important phone numbers of state and federal agencies, such as the agriculture pollution emergency hotline and FBI field offices. Once completed, this listing of phone numbers should be posted in one central farm location. An electronic Emergency Planning for the Farm, bulletin E-2575ET, is available on the internet. We have also included a link to this form below the resources for this episode.

13:39 E Presnall

Consult your insurance company to go over coverage and find out what supplies you may need for different emergencies. Make sure to compose action plans for a range of farm emergencies. Start by identifying just a few of the more common events that could occur on your farm, such as a tornado or an entrapment, and create action plans for those emergencies.

E Presnall

Once you have tackled the basics of an emergency action plan, you can continue adding to it, for example, including evacuation plans and kits for livestock or composing action plans for additional emergency situations, and before you know it, you will have a comprehensive emergency action plan for your farm.

14:24 E Presnall

Spend some time gathering your farm's employees and beginning the planning process. It can be helpful to contact your local emergency services, such as the fire department and ambulatory services, to help you think through what they would need in any type of farm emergency to ensure your farm is properly prepared.

E Presnall

Under the resources for this episode, I have included a useful graphic of some of the basic supplies that should be included in a farm first aid kit. I have also included several resources that have information on farm emergency preparedness that can give you an idea of where to start and what you should think about during the planning process.

15:07 E Presnall

If you would like to purchase an entire kit, the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety offers farm first-aid kits for \$50. Designed with farm injuries in mind, the kits contain first-aid supplies, including 114 pieces. This kit is small enough to fit under the seat of a pickup truck or in a tractor or combine. To order a kit, call 563-556-5110, ext. 371, or send an email to Gloria. Her email address and phone number are listed under this episode.

15:48 E Presnall

Listen in on the *FarmSafe* podcast to join in on the conversation about keeping safe on the farm.

We want to hear from you. Share your stories about health and safety issues on the farm, about injuries that made you change the way you work, or about the ways you keep yourself and others safe on your farm. Also let us know if there's questions you have or topics that you want to hear about on the air. You can visit our website, at gpcah.org, or email us.

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Episode Resources

- **Emergency Farm Plan Electronic Template, bulletin E-2575ET:** [https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/emergency_farm_plan_electronic_template_\(e2575et\).pdf](https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/emergency_farm_plan_electronic_template_(e2575et).pdf)
- **Farm First Aid Graphic**
- **Farm Emergency Plan: Tips and Guidance, Purdue University:** <https://www.purdue.edu/engineering/ABE/INPREPared/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Farm-Emergency-Plan-Tips-and-Guidance.pdf>
- **USDA Livestock Preparedness Fact Sheet:** <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-livestock-preparedness-fact-sheet.pdf>

Episode Contacts

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Photo

