

**Episode Title:** Community Building for Rural Response to Emergencies

**Topic:** Emergency Response Efforts in Rural Environments

**Summary:** In this episode, we will explore the topic of emergency preparedness and response in the rural environment. Brian Fiest, BSN, RN, and Emergency Preparedness Clinical Subject Matter Expert and Dr. Richard Sidwell, trauma surgeon at Iowa Methodist, dive into community building and how it relates to preparedness and response efforts for rural emergencies. "One advantage that the small communities have is a depth of social capital. People want to help; people want to be involved with community. People have that community pride. Have social organizations be part of the disaster plan."

**Expert:** Brian Fiest, RN; Dr. Richard Sidwell, Trauma Surgeon

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#### Episode Quote:

*"It's a constantly evolving process to be prepared. And I don't think anyone has ever felt 100% ready for a disaster."*

– Brian Fiest, BSN, RN, Emergency Preparedness Clinical Subject Matter Expert

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## 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.

### 00:33 E Presnall

Many first responders in an accident or emergency may consist of volunteers with varying degrees of training, certification, and equipment. The organization of community preparedness and response to a crisis or emergency, like an entrapment in a grain bin or an accident involving agricultural equipment, can be facilitated by Extension and other community developers. Such community developers have the ability to offer training programs at different levels in order to encourage community involvement.

### E Presnall

For example, training in civic engagement and community development should be the cornerstone of any community-based emergency response initiative. Extension and other community development educators might offer this kind of training, which would provide a framework and understanding for incorporating a wide range of local perspectives into long-term emergency response and other local efforts.

### 01:36 E Presnall

Local fire departments and their volunteers provide much of the response efforts to farmers and other residents in rural communities and are one example of where training for community development and involvement has been successful. Today's shared story is from a local fire department that responded to an emergency event involving a farmer from the community.

### 02:11 Guest Speaker, Shared Story

OK, so we were dispatched to a gentleman who was trapped in a skid loader. We didn't have a whole lot of details, but we got on scene and it was an older farmer on his own farm doing his own work with his own skid loader. And he had taken a 4 by 4 post. Like a big wooden post and was using it to transport some things, I don't know the exact details, but basically the arms of the skid loader, he had a bucket on it. They came down and the post was on his lap across his legs. And it trapped the post, trapping his legs so it couldn't come down any farther. But it also, the post, had pushed the controls all the way forward. So, it was kind of jammed. Stuck. So, we

responded, and we also called a nearby fire department, a full-time fire department, for their special operations. They have a larger rescue truck, a larger team with more equipment. They're full time. So, we called to get them on the way, which is going to be a good 20, 25 minutes.

### **03:18 Guest Speaker, Shared Story**

Our folks got there and started to do what we call cribbing, which is we stabilize the arms of the skid loader to try to relieve some of the pressure, and then we ended up cutting the four by 4 apart, but we had to be careful about it just like exploding and blowing apart as we started to cut it because of the pressure it was under and that was plan A. But we also had plan BC&D. We had to think of, OK, if this doesn't work, what are we going to do next? If this doesn't work, what are we going to do next? So, then we were looking at draining hydraulic lines, cutting hydraulic pistons, which is not a good idea, just a couple of other things, but luckily, we were able to stabilize it and to cut the post and get him out. He was transported by helicopter, and he was fine.

### **04:17 E Presnall**

Since many rural communities have fewer resources compared to urban areas—such as a workforce, finances, distribution, and access to care—having an emergency preparedness plan is imperative. However, these limitations should not define a community's ability to respond to an emergency. Unique assets within rural communities such as tightly knit social networks may act as a catalyst to support emergency preparedness capabilities.

### **E Presnall**

To explore the role of community involvement in preparing and responding to emergencies in rural areas, I talked with Brian Fiest and Dr. Richard Sidwell. Brian is a nurse by trade, currently working at Telligen, where he is the subject matter expert when it comes to disaster management. DR Sidwell is a trauma surgeon at Iowa Methodist in Des Moines, Iowa. A major focus of DR Sidwell's professional activities has been rural injury care and injury preparedness, as well as the rural trauma system.

### **05:25 E Presnall**

Do you have any kind of advice or tips for people residing in rural areas of how they help can themselves, be prepared, but also provide assistance to kind of improve response time and of EMS workers and also just the overall outcome for someone who is injured.

### **05:49 B Fiest**

When it comes to emergency preparedness, I think one of the big things that I constantly try to preach is individual preparedness. Another thing that I want to mention too is the use of generators. Power is the number one most requested resource during and after disasters. There has to be some accountability that happens at that individual state to set themselves up for preparedness. And also, too, rely on your neighbors. Yes, the burden is more heavily shouldered in those rural areas, but so is the community. So is the relationship in that building. If we can build on top of that and say, my neighbor down the street is a diabetic, their power went out, their generators down. I know that they need insulin or their wheelchair or oxygen is dependent on power.

### **B Fiest**

Because a lot of times you'll see a huge wave of people coming to the hospital of people who aren't injured. But still needs some sort of medical assistance, whether that be power like, I just said, food, water, all of those critical infrastructure pieces that we tend to forget about and only focus on the actual event itself. But the ripple effects that happen after the fact also need to be identified in pathways forward. And we do that by community building.

### **06:45 E Presnall**

And can you kind of go into a little bit of what that community building would look like?

### **06:51 B Fiest**

Yeah, absolutely. A lot of places have Lions clubs or your church has an organization that gets together, even stuff just from the school perspective, because a lot of times when you're looking for a big area to house a bunch of people, it's going to be at that school level. So, having these conversations with people to get identified as to what is our plan as a county and tell our Emergency Management

Agency coordinator until our EMS groups can get to us or if they can't get to us because of a road washed out or debris making a tough go to get to you, have those conversations early and often too.

I remember doing that with my folks and honestly, you should start talking about that with your neighbors. What is your plan? Where do you need the most amount of resources? Or can you compile resources together to move that needle of survival?

#### 07:39 R Sidwell

If I could add one other specific suggestion for people in their preparedness. And that would be a have a basic understanding of first aid. There's a program, it's called **Stop the Bleed** and it's all about teaching people what to do if you're badly injured and bleeding and where that becomes important is if you're in a rural area and EMS response time is maybe 15 minutes, or maybe a little bit longer and that would be a pretty good EMS response time in a lot of places around the state.

#### 08:10 R Sidwell

But if you're injured and bleeding, you need to rely on yourself or you need to rely on the people that you're with to do that basic first aid until the trained medics arrive. And every community in Iowa is equipped to teach a course called Stop the Bleed. You can think of it as like the injury equivalent of CPR. What a bystander would do until EMS arrives, from a from kind of a system preparedness, Brian's right to small communities. One advantage that the small communities has is a depth of social capital. People want to help; people want to be involved with community. People have that community pride. Brian brought up the Lions Club that touched my heart. Because I'm in the Lions Club, but having the social organizations be part of the disaster plan.

#### R Sidwell

For example, a grain bin explosion. There's a tornado. Whatever the event happens to be. There's going to need to be a gathering place. And the hospital is a terrible gathering place. Because having a bunch of people that just gums up the system of trying to actually take care of the injured people, and so maybe the gathering place is going to be at the Legion Hall. And that's pulling in, using some of that social capital to involve the community in the in the planning.

#### 09:23 E Presnall

Sometimes when we're talking with farmers about how they specifically can prepare themselves, prepare their farms so that the outcome is better, we try to think through things like, can you put some sort of map of you know, post a map of your farm and let them know, hey, this is where all of the emergency shutoffs to like the grain bins. That sort of thing. So. We really want to kind of expand on what we're able to provide farmers with as far as tips and advice go, for specifically how farmers themselves can prepare and kind of where they can put things on their farm.

#### 10:00 R Sidwell

Having a means of contacting help. The farmer, the agriculture workers, so much of what they're doing can be off on their own, even if it's just, you know, taking feed out to the lot. Having your cell phone. Having a means of notifying help so that you're not injured, unable to summon someone and waiting to be discovered. In terms of time, that's probably the first big suggestion that I make. And then being, again, just kind of prepared with your own first aid equipment, if you will.

#### 10:31 B Fiest

Something that has been utilized for, under my understanding, at least the last 10 years and probably longer, are these things called **File for Life** folders. It's something that has your medical information. Allergies, comorbidities listed, any disease processes that you have any ailments or any assistive devices hearing aids, that kind of stuff. And you write it all out and what you do is you put it in a bag and you put it on your fridge, and again that works more for you know, apartment complexes when they need to evacuate real quick and they come across someone that's unresponsive. They've got name, age, all the stuff that they need for it, but when it comes to the farming, you know that resource is a is a free downloadable PDF that you can fill out yourself having the cab of your combine your tractor farm, truck, your Gator or whatever it is that you have, as well as also in your home too, so that when EMS comes up, there's a good chance they know you anyway from the community aspect of it, but might not have that integral detail of what it's like from your medical side outside of the same stuff that that they hear about, you know, at coffee at Caseys, right. Again, that requires a little bit of

individual responsibility to have that form. It's something that's not as widely distributed as one would hope, especially that being a free resource and very easy to use and the person can fill it out themselves.

#### 11:53 R Sidwell

From a technology standpoint, the what's called Smart 911, is built on that and so it takes what Brian's describing from a very kind of low tech, you've got something hanging on your refrigerator to Smart 911 is completely a voluntary thing that you sign up and you can put in, for example, the number of people in your household, the pets that are in your household, how many floors there are where fences are where if they're shut off, you can put in medical information. If you choose to, but that's information that then can be transmitted to responders if there's a 911 call from your location.

#### 12:32 B Fiest

The way technology has evolved, has made it a lot easier to stay in communication with folks. And I think something that's also a point of interest to people is that sometimes data is easier to get out than actually making the phone call. So having a text line or something like that is also helpful for EMS to set up those kind of services. When you think a little bit more globally about statewide alerts and everything, we've got **Alert Iowa** and I think that's a great resource to have download on your phone and lets you know what's coming across the state keeps everyone up to date on potential hazards and everything like that. But again, just that that Community feel is always going to be a big one. Always let someone know where you're going to. It sounds ridiculous, redundant, but at the same point, I know that my in laws, for example, they're farmers and my mother-in-law knows exactly where my father-in-law is at every point of the day and what he's doing. So that accountability is big. But we also know that farmers can live alone. And so they don't have that familiar check in or routine down, and that's when we get into some troubles that we don't find someone until it's been too long.

#### 13:42 B Fiest

You go through the Stop the Bleed course, and it talks to you about hemorrhage control and bleeding control and, you know the underlying foundation for this is that it was identified that bleeding is the number one cause of preventable death after injury. So an injury happens that's bad, but people end up passing because of not having that circulated blood flow. I've got a tourniquet in my house. I've got a tourniquet in my truck. "Chance favors the prepared mind," right? So, I think that that kind of sits with us, that the better prepared and mitigation efforts that you've done to identify what possible hazards exist. And we can appreciate in farming there's a lot. You've got a 36% higher mortality rate than any other occupation. So, it's dangerous by the trade alone. Just making sure that you are doing those activities that are keeping yourself safe, you are keeping that safe distance from that bull or that that hog, you're doing the normal stuff that you're supposed to be doing, but you're doing it day in and day out that sometimes our mind gets a little bit complacent with it, and that's when injury and accidents tend to happen. So, if we can, if we can keep callousing our mind to do our safety checks, just like when we walk out of the house, do we have our keys, our wallet, sunglasses, you know, that routine where you slap yourself like mosquitoes are attacking you? It's the same thing. Do I have my tourniquet? Do I have my cell phone? Do I have everything that I need in case something bad or worse happens?

#### 15:10 B Fiest

I think another thing that that your listeners might benefit from too is, you know, the Iowa Department of Homeland Security. We also have the **Iowa Disaster, Human Resource Council** and what this is, it's a group that brings like, faith, faith-based groups [years], some government organizations and starts to look at fostering that relationship of response and also follow through into recovery. They're a great group to understand a little bit about what they can help provide, and they do a good job of filling in those gaps and understanding of what it is that might be missing because you know, we kind of get blinders on when we start going through this process because we're like, OK, if this happens, then this, then this. And as we all know, disasters don't follow an algorithm, nor do they nor do they come through at the same way each time. So, you might have gone through a tornado and survived, thankfully, but the next time that tornado is going to hit different, there's going to be different aspects to it. Different wind speeds. We wanted to use those lessons learned in those best practices, but also understand that it's a constantly evolving process to be prepared. And I don't think anyone has ever felt 100% ready for a disaster.

#### 16:22 E Presnall

I think it's really about knowing what's out there and what's available to you. You know, I think a lot of times it's that gap in knowing resources or people to contact in your area. I think there are a lot of people out there that are trying to be more prepared for these

situations. I mean we know that it's a thing that we need to improve on but then you have to take the extra step and say, OK, now we've improved on this, we have someone to provide these services, but we need to make sure that people know that this service or this resource is actually there. So, it's kind of a follow through thing of making sure that people in the community know that this is there now and how to contact them and get in touch with them is gonna be a big thing.

#### 17:07 E Presnall

The success of emergency preparedness measures, particularly in rural regions, depends on community involvement. To build capacity, widespread, multisector partnership is essential. Leaders from health care, public health, faith, education, government, and the broader community must all work to effectively execute a practical, effective, and widely applicable model of capacity building at multiple levels, especially within the realm of emergency preparedness.

#### E Presnall

Encouraging local participation in emergency preparedness and response ultimately involves much more than just meeting basic and logistical needs of the community. It ensures that local voices are heard, local struggles are recognized, and the dignity of local people is respected. With this capacity established, local citizens can respond and recover in a manner that improves local life.

#### 18:09 E Presnall

While community involvement is critical to emergency preparedness and response in rural areas, preparedness still requires a level of individual responsibility. As we briefly discussed in our last episode, the most basic level of protection includes putting a map of the farmstead inside an emergency tube at a visible location for emergency responders. The map should identify exactly where and in which buildings hazardous materials — such as gas, diesel, pesticides, propane, treated seed and other flammables — are stored. It should identify where the water wells or any unused or abandoned wells are located.

#### E Presnall

For this week's episode, take some time to explore options for mapping your farm. One option to consider is Farm Mapper, which is a cloud-based mapping application built from the ground up for farmers, ranchers, and anyone who works in the agricultural industry. The link to Farm Mapper is included in the resources for this episode. Also under the resources are links that were mentioned during our conversation with our experts, including links to the Stop the Bleed program, File for Life folder, and Smart 911.

#### 19:27 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](http://gpcah.org), or email us.

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## Episode Resources

- **Stop the Bleed Program:** <https://www.stopthebleed.org/>
- **File for Life Folder:** [https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/ready-gov\\_disaster-preparedness-guide-for-older-adults.pdf](https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/ready-gov_disaster-preparedness-guide-for-older-adults.pdf)
- **Disaster Preparedness Guide for Older Adults:** [https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/ready-gov\\_disaster-preparedness-guide-for-older-adults.pdf](https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/ready-gov_disaster-preparedness-guide-for-older-adults.pdf)
- **Smart 911:** <https://smart911.com/>
- **Alert Iowa:** <https://homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/alert-iowa/>

## Photo

