

Wildfire: ARE YOU PREPARED?

Working together to survive a wildfire disaster: The importance of neighborhood planning

Take a moment to remember the devastation caused by the Oak Knoll fire in Ashland just a few weeks ago, and the folks who lost their homes. Thankfully, no lives were lost in spite of the lightning speed with which the fire spread through the eleven homes it destroyed. It was a prime example of how rapidly a fire can move through grass and brush and then from one structure to another. Most Applegate residents are well aware that one doesn't have to live in a forested area or in an area designated high wildfire risk to be vulnerable.

The importance of having a plan in place before a fire or any other disaster strikes is evident. One of the most important things you can do after putting together an emergency/evacuation plan for your family (including pets, horses and livestock) is to meet with your neighbors. Emergency services may be overwhelmed during a disaster so it's important to be self sufficient for at least 72 hours following a disaster. This is much easier to do with the support of neighbors.

The Applegate Animal Disaster Preparedness Committee is a group of Applegate residents dedicated to helping the community prepare for the care of pets and livestock during a catastrophic wildfire or other disaster. While animals are the focus, preparing for our animals also helps us prepare for ourselves. Not making plans in advance for the evacuation and sheltering of our animals ultimately becomes a human safety issue, for owners and responders alike.

The group has identified six priority areas:

1. Securing alternative sheltering sites for horses and livestock
2. Securing alternative sheltering sites for pets
3. Neighborhood planning
4. Informing the community
5. Identifying needed equipment and supplies
6. Identifying/securing volunteer resources

The current emphasis is on securing alternative sites for sheltering large animals, and on organizing neighborhood meetings. A recent meeting of folks in the Missouri Flat area covered everything from how to get help creating defensible space, to making plans for the evacuation of pets and livestock, to creating phone trees for disseminating information. It's also a time to determine who has special needs requiring assistance and to list what skills and equipment could be available during a disaster. Jack Shipley organized the meeting, complete with air photos of the neighborhood. These air photos can be very useful in identifying evacuation routes, potential locations for sheltering large animals, etc.

Members of the Applegate Animal Disaster Preparedness Committee encourage all Applegate residents to take part in, or organize, a neighborhood meeting. Even though we're nearing the end of summer, September can be a very busy time of the fire season, and efforts to organize during winter and spring could pay off handsomely by being prepared in advance for the next fire season. Assistance and resources can be made available. If you would like to organize a neighborhood meeting, please contact either of the representatives below:

Michele Brown-Riding, committee chair
541-846-1460, Michele@apbb.net.

Lin Bernhardt, staff/consultant –
541-840-9903, linb@clearwire.net

We also welcome - and encourage - anyone interested to attend our meetings. We meet the third Monday of the month at the Applegate Library at 10 am. Our next meeting will be October 18. We'd love to see you there!

Securing the Whole Family

Things to do right now:

- Make a plan
- Ask friends or family living outside the area if they can keep your animals in case you need to evacuate. (Don't leave pets at home!)
- Keep a pet carrier for each pet – one that allows your pet to stand and turn around.
- The carrier should be marked with your pet's identification.
- Make sure large animals are comfortable loading in a trailer.
- If you can't evacuate livestock, determine in advance a secure place where you'll move them (do not lock them in a barn!)
- Have all animals up to date on vaccinations
- Have identification for all animals
- Prepare an evacuation kit

For information on developing emergency plans, visit Jackson and Josephine county's websites – www.Jacksoncounty.org and www.co.josephine.or.us. For animal emergency plans pick up the booklet Saving the Whole Family at the county offices or view it at www.avma.org.

Lin Bernhardt • 541-840-9903

Would you like to volunteer?

I have skills in handling _____, transporting _____ companion animals _____, horses _____, livestock _____

I would like to attend training to be able to help: companion animals _____, horses _____, livestock _____

I have a stock/horse trailer(s) that can transport _____(number) _____(types of animals).

I have space on my property to temporarily shelter _____(number) _____(types of animals).

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone # _____

E-mail address _____

Send completed form to
Michele Brown-Riding
14921 N. Applegate Road, Grants Pass, 97527
or scan and e-mail to Michele@apbb.net.



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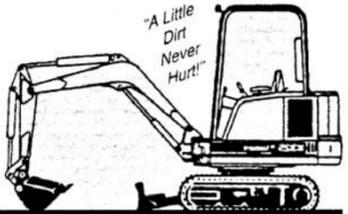
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