

RESPONDING TO NATURAL AND UNEXPECTED DISASTERS



Animal rights groups will use any opportunity to kick the animal agriculture community when it's down, including attempting to capitalize on devastating events like natural disasters, barn fires, and other accidents.

Background

Accidents and natural disasters happen to everyone, but animal rights groups are waiting just around the corner to twist those events to fit their anti-animal agriculture narrative.

- [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#) (PETA) is one of the main groups to get involved after a transportation accident. The group is known to put out statements and billboards in efforts to gain attention and publicity. In December of 2020, PETA released a “memorial” billboard off a highway in New York after a truck transporting cattle was overturned. The billboard stated “See the Individual. Go Vegan.” in hopes of encouraging people that taking meat off their plates will prevent future accidents.
- The [Animal Save Movement](#) has also been known to involve themselves in incidents by attempting to “rescue” injured animals. The group is also known to hold “vigils” after natural disasters and accidents pertaining to animal agriculture.
- [Direct Action Everywhere](#) (DXE) has been known to hold vigils as well. Recently, the Phoenix chapter of DXE held a “vigil” at an egg farm in Arizona after a barn fire occurred in March of 2021. Typically, they bring multiple activists on site to give speeches, hold banners, etc.

The Alliance encourages all farms and facilities to have a crisis plan in place *before* disaster strikes. View our “Crisis Planning Basics” resource for more information: <https://animalagalliance.org/resource/crisis-planning-basics/>. Be proactive in planning for disasters, natural or man-made, and have a team ready to act to take care of your animals in such times.

Not all such crises can be prevented, however. Below are recommendations to follow *after* a natural disaster or unexpected accident occurs.

Recommendations

1. **Know the facts.** Gather as much information about the incident as possible. Speak with all parties directly involved, including any law enforcement so you have a clear understanding about what happened.
2. **Be transparent.** Provide details about the situation with your team members, letting them know what happened and what is being done about it. Employees can be the best advocates to community members on your behalf. You do not want your employees to feel as though they were left in the dark about a situation or find out from someone other than your company leadership.



3. **Managing Inquiries.** As recommended in our “Crisis Planning Basics” resource, ensure all emails, calls, media and social media inquiries about the incident are directed to the approved company spokesperson(s). The spokesperson(s) should be designated prior to a natural disaster or unexpected accident.
4. **Monitor the media.** Keep an eye on any media coverage of the incident, looking for mentions on social media and in local and mainstream news. If the story does appear in the media, watch closely to see if it gains additional traction. You may need to re-evaluate your response plan based on the amount of pickup the story receives.
5. **Communicate.** Draft an email to your customers about the situation and reinforce your commitment to animal care, transportation, safety, etc. Include a statement about the situation and how it was managed for the best outcomes for the care of the animals and the potential impact for supply chain disruption (or not). If the situation is gaining a lot of public attention or you begin getting media inquiries, release the pre-drafted statement on your website, social media and to your key media contacts that will help share your statement with the public.
6. **Prepare.** Beware of activists showing up to the scene, requesting to take animals, trying to steal them or impeding the ability to care for animals by protesting or holding vigils. Refer to our “Preparing for Protests” resource for additional guidance: <https://animalagalliance.org/resource/preparing-for-protests-on-farms/>.
7. **Evaluate.** After the dust begins to settle, reevaluate how the situation occurred and how to prevent a similar situation in the future. Create a plan of preventative measures and include a plan of action in case the incident occurs again or reevaluate your existing plan, if you have one to include any lessons learned.