



Discussion Topic

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A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau

QUESTIONS

1. When was the last time your farm updated its emergency planning procedures? How long since emergency phone numbers listed by the phone have been updated?
2. How can a county community action group help local farmers be prepared for any and all emergencies?
3. Evaluate your county farmers' preparedness for a natural disaster and a terrorist attack. What more can be done to protect individual farms and the entire community?

How safe is your farm?

If terrorists are hell-bent on attacking high-profile targets that kill the most people and destroy the morale of Americans, why would they bother to target a farm?

Terrorist motives are baffling to say the least, and figuring them out is better left to terrorism experts. Farmers, experts in a different area crucial to homeland security – food – are better off concerning themselves with being prepared for disaster, no matter if it comes from terrorists or natural disasters.

Experts in emergency preparedness from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Michigan State University say the basics of being prepared can be summarized in four steps.

First, farmers must plan. That means conducting a threat assessment and listing all potential on-farm emergencies. After that, emergencies can be prioritized and plans can be made.

To help with a plan, experts recommend consulting with local law enforcement, veterinarians, Extension agents, insurance providers and others.

After the individual farm emergency plan is complete, it's important to train employees and family members on correct courses of action should an emergency arise.

Training includes trial runs – the third step in the recommendation – such as practice fire drills and tornado drills, which can be evaluated later to find potential weak links in the plan. Remember, practice makes perfect.

The last step is to periodically reassess risks and take corrective action. Reassessment should be done when new equipment is in place, when new threats are identified, and when changes are made in suppliers or customers, among other things.

Vigilance is the key, but even the most alert farm operators need to have a plan in place. Plans prevent panic and help shorten the emergency event, thus helping the farm recover as quickly as possible.