Emergency Action Planning

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Personal Safety

Emergency procedures should not be developed in the midst of a crisis. The ever-changing livestock industry has created a greater need for workers than what the current availability of experienced farm workers has to offer. Many of today’s new hires are not experienced livestock people, and perhaps in some cases, have never been on a livestock production facility. These new workers may not be aware of the potential safety risk that could be present on a livestock production unit.

Another challenge that is becoming more apparent on larger farms is the diversity of ethnic backgrounds of the labor force. Many of these men and women may not speak English as a first language or perhaps do not know enough English to communicate effectively during an emergency. It is critical to the safety of these workers and the integrity of the operation that proper training and explicit signage be implemented and displayed. At no time should workers who might not be able to communicate with off farm emergency personnel be left alone on the site.

Personal safety training programs should include at least these topics.

- Health emergencies: heart attacks, respiratory distress, etc.
- Bodily injuries: uncontrolled bleeding, broken bones, etc.
- Confined space entry
- Fire to structures or fields
- Unvented gas powered equipment and heaters
- Electrical shock, hydraulic pressure burst, and power-take-off equipment.
- Manure spills

Spill Recovery Plan

Plan for a spill and hope it never happens. What does having a spill recovery plan have to do with manure management? In reality, this could be the most important component of your success in pork production. Consider the expense of restoring someone’s water supply that was contaminated by a manure spill that was not contained in time. I can think of no better way to instill confidence in our industry than by assuring our neighbors that we have a plan to minimize the environmental risks of a manure spill.
Spill containment and recovery plans are vitally important today. In some instances producers are pumping manure to fields up to five miles away. Many times pipes and hoses go under roads, span ditches, and snake across neighbors’ land. Whether manure is pumped thru pipelines or transported on public roadways, the opportunity for accidents is an ever-present risk.

Erratic and unpredictable weather events can challenge the manure storage’s structural integrity and management practices. A properly drafted spill recovery plan will define the area of operations and equipment availability needed to contain or clean up a manure spill.

The plan should identify personnel and how they are to be called. Key procedures that are to be used for specific types of spills should be listed and explained to all persons involved with the operation. We will all sleep better at night knowing the planning has been done and that everyone involved understands the plan.

Spill recovery is a six-part process.

1. Attend to any personal injuries.
2. Stop the manure flow.
3. Contain the spilled manure.
4. Remove and land apply the spilled manure.
5. Make any needed repairs to containment or equipment.
6. Restore the affected landscape.

**Spill Reporting and Record Keeping**

In many instances producers are unclear as to what the reporting requirements are, and to who manure spills are to be reported. States have different definitions of reportable spills and have not well published the proper procedures for spill reporting. In some geographic areas, spills are reported to a common statewide 24-hour reporting line, and in other parts of the country a local agency is to receive the report.

A producer should contact the state regulatory agency responsible for confined animal operations and obtain the required phone numbers and procedures to be followed in the unlikely event that a manure spill would occur. These numbers and procedures should be clearly understood by all employees involved in the operation.

A record keeping system is clearly a vital part of documenting any emergency event. If there ever is a question about the activities that occurred, a detailed printed report is the producer’s best defense.

**Standards of Operation**

Written standards of operation can be a valuable accountability and responsibility tool. Each aspect of the operation should have defined actions and procedures that are to be implemented to
minimize the risks associated with production and safety. Standards of operation should address at least these operational aspects.

- Personal safety
- General site appearance and maintenance
- Building maintenance and ventilation operation
- Manure storage and handling and nutrient evaluation
- Land application procedures and record keeping
- Mortality management procedures

These standards should be organized and readily accessible to operation personnel.

**Action Plan Reviews and Updates**

Emergency action plans should be frequently reviewed and updated. Each changing season brings different safety challenges to the operation. Producers should prepare a training calendar to assure regular training occurs. Another vital part of the training process is a system to record content and participation of training events.

Frequent communication with employees is very important to determine the safety concerns they have, or risks they may identify, in their everyday work. It is important to address the concerns and develop action procedures to minimize the risk.

Anytime changes are made to the operation, or new employees are brought into the operation, thorough training is the responsibility of the ownership.

Safety in the work place should be everyone’s concern.