

**SAFETY
FIRST**

Personal Safety: It Starts With You!

By Cody Grasty, NCDA&CS, NCDA&CS Incident Management Team Safety Officer

There's nothing like getting that phone call – the one that says you are going from standby to activated status for an incident. A whirlwind of thoughts go through your head as the voice on the phone gives you the details about your mission. What will I pack? Who do I need to call? Who will take care of the kids and the pets? Did I fill up the car with gas? Then, with a sudden jerk back to reality, the voice on the phone asks 'can you be here?' Of course you can! This is the moment you have been waiting for. With one simple word, you have become part of something bigger, something much larger than yourself or any single responder. But, a word of caution, take a moment and step back. This is the best opportunity you will have to prepare for your health and safety before, during, and after a response.

A response for you can be broken down into three phases – before you respond, during the response, and demobilization. These phases will be how you define time for the ensuing week or so. Let's talk about personal safety in each phase and break down some essential elements that may be helpful for your next deployment. As a general reminder, everyone is responsible for safety – you especially are more responsible for your own safety.

When you do get the phone call, take a moment to compose yourself and ask some hard questions. What's the situation? Where will I/we be sleeping? Are medications available? Is electricity/communications available? Will I/we be inside? Ask other appropriate questions as well. This will give you situational awareness for what you're going into.

Maybe you take medications – pack them. A pharmacy may not be available in a disaster area. If medications need to be refrigerated, you need to tell the person calling you so arrangements can be made. If you are part of an outdoor operation, you may need to pack long sleeve shirts, sunscreen, hats, jackets, bug spray, and other personal items to protect you from the environment. Many people are allergic to foods or insects, among other things. These special considerations need to be relayed to your operations supervisor ahead of time for appropriate arrangements. Maybe you easily sprain joints or have difficulty lifting items due to medical issues or recent surgeries. These need to be discussed prior to deployment with your supervisor as well, to make sure you are not injured further. If night time operations will be happening, you want to be sure to pack flashlights. Some responders have special needs for personal protective equipping – such as prescription safety glasses. Be prepared to bring those or let your supervisor know before deploying.

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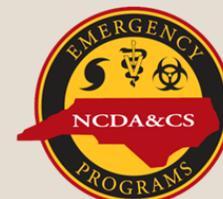


**NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE &
CONSUMER SERVICES**

Emergency Programs Division

Steve Troxler, Commissioner

Sharron Stewart, Director



South Carolina: Pets, Livestock and Wildlife Rescued Following Floods

Courtesy of South Carolina Emergency Management

COLUMBIA, S.C. (October 13, 2015, 2:45 p.m.) – As flood waters surrounded a three-square mile area in Georgetown County, Dick Green traded his four-wheel drive for a motor boat to rescue and feed stranded animals.

Green, the senior director for rescues at the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, traveled from Santa Rosa, California, to help South Carolina rescue and protect pets, horses and livestock. He was one of 25 people working under the National Animal Rescue and Sheltering Coalition dedicated to animal rescue following South Carolina’s historic Oct. 4 flooding.

After working in other sections of the state, Green arrived at the height of Georgetown County’s flooding. He entered near the Big Dam Swamp community that had become isolated by flooded roads.

“The horses were looking healthy,” Green said as his teams shuttled in horse feed. He fed several dogs whose owner was hospitalized and couldn’t get back to their home. He crawled through a second story window to leave enough food for several cats whose owner had been displaced.

In addition to NARSC, county animal shelters, Department of Natural Resources wildlife officers, the Large Animal Rescue Team, South Carolina Awareness and Rescue for Equines (SCARE), and other rescue organizations have been pulling traumatized animals from floodwaters, assessing damaged facilities and distributing food.



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COMPLETE YOUR VRC REGISTRATION AT WWW.SERVNC.ORG

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Please see our website for future training and activities.
- Check out our sheltering webinars posted on the website!
- www.ncagr.gov/oep/sheltering/

REQUIREMENTS FOR VRC DEPLOYMENT

- ICS 100, 200, and 700
- Biosecurity/PPE Training
- Knowledge of NC Emergency Management
- Knowledge of Emergency Support Functions
- Attendance at VRC Meetings
- Sign a Code of Conduct

Get all of the details for when and where you will be arriving for staging and plan a route before leaving. Share that plan with someone, including your supervisor, and let them know an expected ETA to your destination. Something could happen along the way and there might not be cell phone reception. Pack food and water for the trip and for snacks when you arrive. In general, before you leave you need to have everything you will need packed and with you and a planned route that has been shared with someone. Don't assume everything will be provided to you.

While you are working during the response, you will be inundated by messages, plans, and other communications. **But remember, safety comes first.** A safety message will accompany every Incident Action Plan. It may be a general message, but read it and make sure you understand what is being conveyed. When entering your assigned work area, take time to assess risks and hazards, communicate that assessment with your supervisor, and mitigate safety concerns immediately. This applies to safety concerns for yourself and for others. If you were in an office and bumped your knee on a file cabinet door that had been left open, you would most likely close it so you and others wouldn't bump their knees. Same principle applies here.

There is an element of risk to all the work we do, both routinely and during disasters. We have to determine what is an acceptable risk. For example, a dog is on top of a car in a flooded area. We do not have life preservers or rope. It would not be an acceptable risk to try and save the dog. Conversely, if we had life preservers, a boat, and trained personnel, then the risk might be acceptable. The determination of acceptable risk is an ongoing discussion between team members and leadership. It is best not to assume that any one person knows what the acceptable risk is. Take time to talk and communicate amongst each other and determine that for yourselves. If you are not comfortable with a task or feel uneasy about what you are supposed to do, talk to your supervisor. Also, take this time to discuss mitigation tactics that would reduce the risk of injury to yourself and others – and when possible, act on those tactics.

Most likely, your work will be taxing both physically and mentally. You may not realize it, but adrenaline and coffee may be what's keeping you going. This isn't healthy or productive. Take time to rest and re-center. When you forget to rest, your work performance decreases, you make mistakes, or worse, you may hurt yourself or someone else. Take time to eat and get your nourishment. Mistakes can happen because we are not getting what our bodies and minds need.

Report injuries immediately. Responders who have been activated through the emergency management system are covered by insurance. There is no reason not to report injuries. By immediately reporting any injuries to your supervisor, you are decreasing the chances of a denial of your worker's compensation insurance claim. By rule, only those injuries reported within 24 hours of their occurrence must be covered by worker's compensation insurance. Further, no response agency wants you to suffer or continue working while injured. Don't suffer in silence.

Demobilization – finally you will get to go home and sleep in your own bed. Before you leave, make sure you get some rest. Most response agencies will require you to rest 8 hours before travelling. You are their responsibility until you get home. Also, make sure to share the route you will be travelling and an ETA to home with someone from the response agency and someone at home. When you arrive home, be sure to let the response agency and your home contact know.

Sometimes injuries don't manifest themselves until we get home. It could be we thought something was just muscle soreness from fatigue, but now is hurting all the time. Or the stress of the response could manifest itself through depression, anxiety, insomnia or some other mental health issues. All of this should be reported back to the response agency for further instructions and evaluation. It is not uncommon that responders return home and just need someone to talk to and debrief with after the time they spent on a response. This is ok. The big point here is if you need help, let someone know.

I encourage you to research 'responder safety for incidents or response' for yourself. Any thought you dedicate to your safety will give you a clear advantage for returning home safely. **Remember – you are especially responsible for your own safety!**

VRC MISSION: Train and prepare professionals in the animal care community to respond to disaster

NOTES: To see recent news and updates, please visit the VRC website at www.ncvrc.org. If you have questions about the VRC or would like to offer suggestions or articles for future newsletters, contact Mandy at mandy.tolson@ncagr.gov.

Rescue crews from the S.C. Department of Natural Resources made about 40 animal rescues since the flooding began Oct. 4.

In Ridgeville, S.C. DNR Captain Lee Ellis reported the evacuation of two pigs, four goats, 12 chickens, eight cats and three dogs from one family, and DNR Captain Karen Swink said officers have also rescued rabbits, squirrels and even a rattlesnake.

“Volunteers gave an amazing amount of support in moving the animals and afterwards, in cleaning up the facility,” said Julie McKenzie, director of rehabilitation for the Center where all of the animals have returned.

“Our guys rescue every living creature,” Swink said. “If you find animals or birds that are sick, injured or disoriented be careful and contact a trained wildlife rehabilitator.”

When the Francis Willis SPCA animal shelter in Summerville flooded, dozens of people showed up for emergency adoptions. Animals from other flooded shelters were taken to out-of-state shelters from Florida to Virginia.

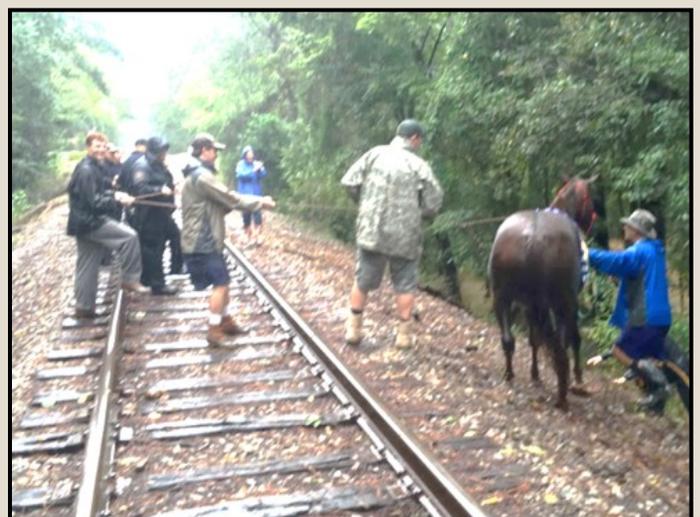
“Local animal shelters have been doing a yeoman’s job in taking in rescued animals even though most shelters are always at or near capacity,” said Charlotte Krugler, DVM. Krugler is heading up the state’s efforts to coordinate resources, identify needs and send resources to affected areas.

The threat of flooding had Carolina Wildlife Center in Columbia scrambling to find alternative locations for the 400 squirrels, rabbits, raccoons and opossums in their care as well as a red-tailed hawk and two owls used for educational purposes. Some pet owners were resistant to evacuating without their pets. Mary Louise Resch was at home Sunday afternoon watching Gov. Halley’s news conference on television when she heard a pounding on the door. A Richmond County sheriff’s deputy said, “We need you to evacuate. It’s not mandatory, but your home is projected to be underwater.”

Resch asked the deputy to help her capture her two Siamese cats, because she wasn’t leaving without them. The deputy put on gloves, and together they were able to get the panicked cats into crates. Resch had five minutes to gather belongings and leave. Fortunately, the hotel she evacuated to accepted pets, and she was able to report to her job at the State Emergency Operations Center representing Harvest Hope Food Bank and the South Carolina Food Bank Association for the next two weeks.

SCARE, set up a covered evacuation site for horses in West Columbia and made trailers available for people who needed help transporting their horses.

Columbia veterinarian Dr. Michael Privett, head of the Large Animal Rescue Team, had a near-death experience when the flooding began. He was called at 7 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 4, and informed that 10 horses were in a barn that was flooding rapidly in northern Richland County. Privett, his wife, and three other members of LART, obtained a boat and headed towards the barn, a place Privett had visited before, but he could not quickly find it because landmarks had disappeared under water.



The rescuers heard two dogs barking and headed the boat in their direction and found them standing on the only high spot around, an area about 15 feet by 40 feet and about 300 yards from the barn.

Privett and his team found the distressed horses with water up to their heads. They led three by boat – the horses swimming by the sides while the rescue team cupped their heads to keep them away from the boat motor. The going wasn't easy. The fences were under water and when the horses' legs hit the fence, they thrashed. Privett encouraged them over, and when they finally made it to the high spot, they left the horses with the dogs and returned to lead the next group.

A frantic mare refused to be led. Privett bridled her and tried over and over again to calm her.

"She would have none of it," Privett said. "I learned a lesson, don't fight a horse in water in a boat."

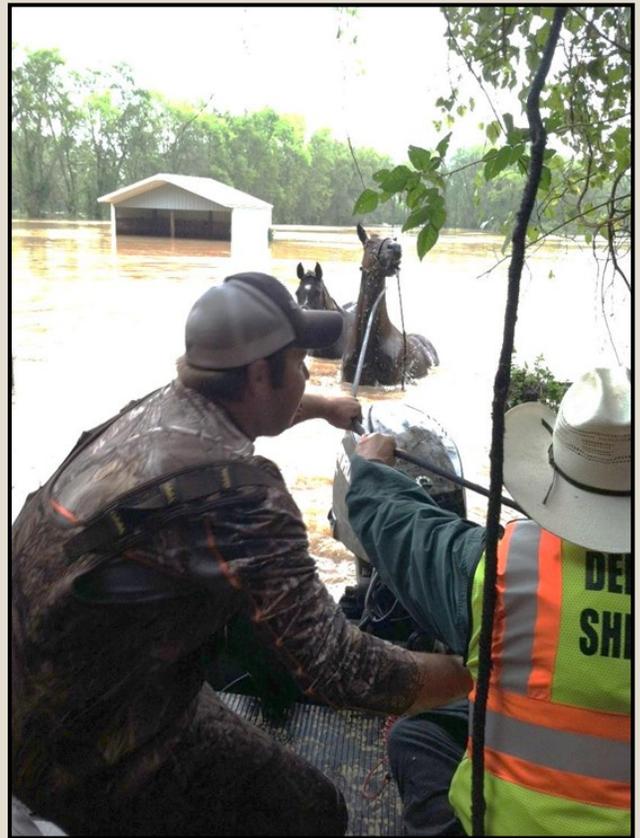
Privett had gotten out of the boat to subdue the mare, a mistake he regrets. In his rain boots and rain slicker he found he couldn't stay above the water. He surfaced a couple of times, saw the boat's lights about 50 feet away and knew the boat couldn't get to him in time.

"I was whipped," Privett said. "I gave up." It was an experience he said he will never forget.

Just then his wife and a friend reached down and dragged him to the surface. The remaining equine rescue attempts were called off.

Returning to the barn the next morning, Privett found the horses in belly-deep water. The water had receded and the horses had survived the night's flooding. However, two sheep drowned and several cows are still missing.

"We've been trained on how to right over-turned horse trailers and how to properly drag a horse, but we've never had training on rescuing 10 horses in 10 feet of water," Privett said. "This is a whole new approach on what water can add to a rescue mission."





ONE HEALTH CORNER

Food safety tips for the Summer!

by Dr. Anna Allen, NCDA&CS

“The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services works diligently every day to ensure a safe and healthy food supply through a variety of regulatory programs, education initiatives for farmers and consumers, and collaborations with other federal, state, and local agencies. That being said, there are still some very important food safety steps to follow at the household and consumer level to keep you and your friends and family healthy while enjoying the bounty of fresh foods available in North Carolina during the summer.” NCDA&CS Assistant Commissioner Joe Rardon

The [foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov) website (www.foodsafety.gov) is an excellent resource for the latest and greatest food safety information. You can also keep up with food recalls on this page, and even sign up to receive email alerts. This site emphasizes four steps for reducing the risk of food borne illness - clean, separate, cook, and chill. Good hand hygiene is still the number one best method for reducing food borne illness, so wash your hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly before preparing food and repeat as necessary when hands become potentially contaminated. An alcohol based hand sanitizer may be used after proper hand washing but is not necessary. In fact, hand sanitizers are not even effective against all bacteria and viruses (including norovirus!) and are less effective if not used properly or used on hands that are visibly dirty. CDC maintains an excellent handwashing website if you are interested in more information (<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>).

It is a great time of year to grow your own fruits and vegetables, join a Community Supported Agriculture group or CSA, or visit your local farmers market for the freshest in-season produce. However, especially for produce that will be consumed raw, it is very important to wash and dry it thoroughly before preparing or eating it. Plain water is all that is necessary, with a bit of extra scrubbing for those foods with tougher outer skin, melons for example. Use a separate cutting board to prepare fresh produce from the one that you use to prepare other foods, especially meats, consistently to prevent cross-contamination, and clean cutting boards, surfaces, and utensils thoroughly when you are done with hot soapy water. It is really important to keep foods separated from the time you leave the grocery store until they are consumed to prevent cross-contamination as best you can.

Proper temperature is also very important. Food should be kept at the appropriate temperature as best you can - cold food needs to remain cold and hot food needs to be hot! The so-called "danger zone" where most food borne illness causing bacteria multiply well is between 40° F (your refrigerator) and 140° F. This really comes into play when food is served at outdoor gatherings or parties when food is prepared and then it sits out for everyone to serve themselves. Cold perishables should not sit out for more than 2 hours and in very warm weather, not more than 1 hour. Keep this in mind when you are hosting or attending all of those get-togethers this summer and offer to help manage the buffet! Cooking and reheating foods to the proper safe temperature is a critical food safety measure and can really only be verified with a food thermometer, not just by look, color, or feel. The [foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov) website has all the information you need about proper cooking temperatures, so take a quick look or print some of their handouts to put up in your kitchen or at your next cookout as reminders.