

October 29, 2012

Preparing NNY Farms for Hurricane Sandy

By Keith Tidball, Cornell University, Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN)

Cornell Cooperative Extension urges all farmers to prepare ahead of time for power outages, structural or crop damage, insurance claims and damage that could accompany Hurricane Sandy, also dubbed “Frankenstorm” and the “Perfect Storm.”

The New York State Office of Emergency Management is already warning citizens of Sandy’s approach, and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets urges farmers to pay close attention to those warnings.

Long-range preparations can include purchasing or making rental agreements for special equipment, making adjustments to property and reviewing business arrangements.

Short-range preparations should focus on immediate concerns such as turning off propane, moving livestock or equipment to safe places or updating phone numbers for emergency assistance.

Equipment needs may include a generator, fuel, a hand fuel pump, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, a flashlight and batteries, NOAA weather radio and batteries, stored water and feed for humans and livestock and a camera to document damage.

Photos of agricultural losses are very helpful to the USDA, especially with their livestock indemnity programs.

Tobacco farms or nursery operations with greenhouses, dairies, and hog and poultry operations are especially vulnerable if power remains out for a lengthy period. Those farmers may want to purchase a generator, and the sooner the better.

Farmers who cannot purchase a generator should consider leasing or negotiating a rental arrangement for a back-up generator in advance. Be aware that some rental contracts are only for eight hours use per day.

Property preparations can include clearing debris from drainage ditches so water can run freely, checking power lines for clearance and pruning or removing trees that could fall on lines, surveying buildings for limbs or trees close to buildings and pounding in extra nails or tightening hurricane straps to prevent wind damage.

Other precautions include clearing away all debris that could blow in high winds, securing farm signs and photographing valuable items and storing the pictures off site.

Farmers and home owners alike should store all business records above flood level,

which is generally at least two feet off the floor.

A final long-range preventive measure is reviewing business affairs, including insurance policies, debt level and finances. Farmers need to ensure they have adequate insurance coverage for homes, vehicles, farm buildings and structures, crops and flood damage.

Finally, farmers should develop an emergency plan for their families and their farm workers and should establish a meeting place where everyone can gather after a disaster. They also need to assign and prioritize preparation and recovery duties.

Short-range preparations are those things to do now, even though Sandy's path is still somewhat uncertain. These include:

- Monitoring local weather reports for up-to-the-minute information on the storm.
- Charging batteries on cell phones and cameras.
- Determining check-in points for family members and workers.
- Storing or securing items or equipment that may blow away or blow into structures, including lawn furniture and ornaments.
- Checking generators to be sure they are in good working order and purchasing sufficient amounts of fuel to operate them.
- Checking feed inventory and ordering extra if needed.
- Moving poultry and livestock to higher ground if possible and sheltering them in securely battened barns, houses or tightly-fenced areas.
- Planning for the possibility of evacuation and identifying horse facilities in nearby vicinities that are willing to take horses in an emergency. Find out what their requirements are for vaccinations or tests such as the Coggins Test. Have a system for permanently identifying each horse with its name, your name and a phone number.
- Turning off the propane supply at tanks and securing tanks in the event of flooding to prevent them from floating away.
- Moving equipment to the highest, open ground possible away from trees or buildings.
- Pumping and storing adequate supplies of drinking water for humans and animals in the case of power outages. Recommendations are for a minimum 36-hour reserve.
- Topping off all gas, propane and other fuel tanks, including the family vehicles.
- Marking animals with an identifier so they can be returned to you if lost. This can include ear tags with name of farm and/or phone numbers, brands, paint markings on hooves or coat or clipped initials in the hair.
- Moving feed to higher ground or to a more accessible place in case of flooding or transportation problems.
- Checking the security of roofing materials, siding and windows and doors in barns and poultry houses to make sure they will not blow off or blow open in strong winds.

- Coordinating with neighbors beforehand to discuss what resources can be shared in the event of power outages or flooding.
- Making a list of important phone numbers ahead of time in order to make calls following a storm. Potential numbers to include are the local emergency management office, county extension agent, insurance agent, county Farm Service Agency and private veterinarian. For local emergency offices, contact <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/oem/contact/>
- Being prepared for storms and hurricanes could help farmers limit their losses, but preparation needs to begin now, before Hurricane Sandy hits Upstate New York.

You may be interested in consulting the Hurricane Irene archive for further information regarding agriculture issues and disaster recovery:

<http://emergencypreparedness.cce.cornell.edu/disasters/pages/irene-lee.aspx>.

Finally, keep up to date with the latest developments regarding Hurricane Sandy at the following social media sites:

https://twitter.com/CCE_Disaster

<http://www.facebook.com/CceEden>.

Additional Note for High Tunnel Growers:

NNY CCE Horticultural Specialist and CCE Clinton County Executive Director Amy Ivy advises high tunnel growers to consider anchoring the tunnels – see examples of anchors and ground anchor equipment in photos below - and closing the tunnels up tight before the winds arrive. -30

One way to anchor a tunnel



Ground anchors

