

Creating a Community Response Plan

When an emergency arises, you may need the assistance of neighboring farmers, fire departments, or other county services. Communities have developed and are encouraged to develop Community Response Plans that help producers respond to large manure spills, emergencies, or catastrophic animal losses. These plans allow the producers to review or develop the components of their farm's Emergency Action Plan with the assistance of neighboring producers and farmers as well as community emergency response personnel. Collectively, this process gives producers the opportunity to determine who in the community (producers, farmers, or community services) owns equipment that may be locally available for use in the event of a manure spill. Large equipment that may be necessary to respond to and clean up a manure spill includes

- Grader.
- Bulldozer.
- Backhoe.
- Front-end loader.
- Portable electric generators.
- Portable diesel pumps and irrigation pipe.
- Vacuum tank wagons.
- Dump trucks.

In the event of a manure spill, several states require or suggest that the local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) be contacted. Traditionally, EMS is contacted to report a fire or medical emergency. Several communities use the EMS network for other emergencies including manure spills. The EMS network organizes local and state agencies such as the Soil and Water Conservation District, county health departments, state water quality agencies, fire department, and the local police or county sheriff to respond and address any manure spill. This level of response may seem excessive, but depending on the spill size and nature, each of these groups may be needed to minimize the extent of environmental damage or risk to public health.

As with most emergencies, it is always better to be prepared than to “test” a response plan during an actual emergency. Several communities have taken this lesson to the farm. Mock “spills” have been conducted to train Manure Spill Teams and test the effectiveness of a community's response plan. Animal producers, farmers, volunteer fire departments, county health departments, and local police or sheriff offices work together to form the Manure Spill Teams. These exercises are not meant to address every possible type of spill or area that may be affected by a spill. Rather, these drills enable the Manure Spill Team (or responding agencies or groups) to work together, develop communication protocols, and establish general procedures that need to be implemented to protect human health, minimize environmental impact, and foster a quick cleanup.

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Mock “spills” ... test the effectiveness of a community's response plan.