

Source: the Rural Coalition

For more on disaster preparation for farmers, click here: **[Shaping & Using The Farm Bill <http://ruralco.businesscatalyst.com/shaping_using_farm_bill.html>](http://ruralco.businesscatalyst.com/shaping_using_farm_bill.html)** for information on **[preparing your farm in advance of and after a hurricane](#)** and to download "Getting Ready For the Big One" Disaster Manual.

GETTING READY FOR THE BIG ONE:

[III. What To Do Just Before and Right After A Disaster \(from the Guide on Getting Ready for the Big One\) - for full guide, click here: Disaster Training Manual Updated 8-11 <http://ruralco.org/literature_100589/Disaster_Training_Manual_Updated_8-11>](#)

So, a natural disaster is imminent or has hit your farm. It may be something small like an early freeze, or something big like a tornado or hurricane. There are certain things you should do just before and right after the disaster in order to get your resources together, and lessen the damage.

- 1) Make sure you have copies of any crop insurance or NAP policy, the names and phone numbers and policy numbers for all your farm, home and family insurance agents and policies, and your records! (Scanning these records and sharing them by email with family members in another location is not a bad idea).
- 2) Prepare your farm and buildings in a manner suitable for the particular disaster. Put away machinery, and turn off power anywhere it will not be used during a storm. Consider having a generator and make sure you have adequate fuel and a safe place to operate it.
- 3) Clear waterways of any debris and secure anything that might damage buildings. If you have crops or hay in the field that is near harvest, consider harvesting what you can if you face a predictable disaster.

4) Prepare to make insurance claims. **Take pictures to document your production before the storm comes.** You will also need to show your planting records, seed purchases, and other evidence including loan documents and your farm and home plan to show what you planted, so be sure to retain these records. You also need schedule F of your tax return and other sales records to document the value of your crops.

5) Keep an inventory (photos, videos and lists) of your house, buildings, vehicles, and valuable equipment and farm BEFORE the disaster occurred. These are very helpful in documenting your claims for insurance purposes. If possible, keep this on a computer and be sure copies are maintained away from your home and farm.

6) Have a plan in place with your family, your friends, and other farmers in the area. Remember the farmers are the most important asset on your farm. Your plan should include the best ways to reach people (i.e. a phone tree) in order to warn each other of a disaster, or provide help to each other.

7) **Keep your cell phone and other equipment fully charged.** Print or copy important phone numbers of family and other key contacts onto a sheet of paper that you carry with you. Remember your cell phone can run out of power and leave you without important contact information.

8) Have a plan in place for the care of your animals! The plan should include options to care for animals if you lose electrical power or access to water.

9) **Be sure to record the evidence of the destruction to your property (via photos or video).** Make sure everyone in your community knows to do this. This is crucial for producers because disaster programs do not pay for damage until long after the disaster--so documentation is essential.

10) DO NOT CLEAN UP UNTIL AFTER YOU CONTACT YOUR INSURER AND HAVE A DAMAGE APPRAISAL. Then develop a rapid response team in order to help each other clean up the damage, and keep clear records of the time spent on this activity. Some time and costs may be eligible for reimbursement from the Emergency Conservation Program.

11) Emergency Conservation Program: The FSA's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides emergency funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters, and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought. County FSA committees determine land eligibility based on on-site inspections of damage, taking into account the type and extent of damage. ECP program participants receive cost-share assistance of up to 75 percent of the cost to implement approved emergency conservation practices. Producers should check with their local county FSA offices regarding ECP sign-up periods, which are set by county FSA committees. For more information on USDA Disaster Programs, after the storm go to the FSA's website at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>

<<http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov/>>

Here is one tool to try out with additional detailed information on making a disaster plan for your farm:

<<http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov/>>

Farm Emergency Plan Template (with thanks to the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture)

<<http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov/>>

http://www.mass.gov/agr/animalhealth/farm_emergency.htm