

USU Environmental Health and Safety

Horse Program Safety Guidelines

Purpose

Establish minimum safety requirements for Utah State University employees, students, volunteers, and other authorized participants involved in university-sponsored horse-related activities.

Scope

These guidelines apply to academic horse programs, research activities, extension activities, horse management or teaching programs, activities at University-owned, leased, or controlled equine facilities, and all off-campus university-sponsored horse involved activities. Individual programs may establish additional requirements and protocols based on their activities and hazards.

Responsibilities

Program Director/Coordinator

- Ensure the programs follow applicable safety requirements.
- Determine training requirements applicable to their program.
- Ensure appropriate training and supervision are provided.
- Address identified hazards.

Instructors/Supervisors

- Provide activity-specific instructions and task-specific safety training.
- Assess participant competency.
- Maintain appropriate supervision.
- Stop unsafe activities.
- Model safe behaviors.

Interns/Students/Participants

- Follow safety procedures.
- Use required PPE.
- Report hazards, injuries, and near misses.
- Do not perform activities for which they are not trained or authorized.
- Stop unsafe activities.

EH&S

- Provide safety guidance and consultation.
- Assist with hazard assessments and incident investigations.
- Develop and maintain university-level safety requirements.
- Aid in the provision of safety trainings.

General Safety Requirements

Participants shall:

- Follow instructions from instructors and supervisors.
- Complete required safety training before participating.
- Use required PPE.
- Only perform activities they have been trained and authorized to perform.
- Maintain awareness of horse behavior and surroundings.
- Dismount before it's too late if you notice signs of agitation or unsafe animal behavior.
- Never engage in horse-related activities while impaired or feeling "under the weather".
- Stop work and reconvene with supervisors if the activity becomes unsafe.
- Report unsafe conditions, injuries, horse incidents, and near misses.
- Follow posted facility rules.

Supervisors/instructors shall:

- Provide appropriate supervision based on participant experience and activity risk.
- Match activities to participant skill level.
- Ensure equipment and facilities are reasonably safe before use.
- Remove unsafe equipment from service.
- Stop activities when conditions become unsafe.
- Create field safety plans for backcountry field trips and rural work or activities
- Ensure communication check-in plans are established as needed for field activities

Horse Handling

Basic safety expectations for handling horses:

- Horses should be approached calmly and deliberately.
- Participants should understand basic horse behavior before handling horses independently.
- Participants should avoid standing directly behind a horse unless the activity requires it and appropriate precautions are being used.
- Horses should be appropriately restrained when required for the activity.
- Participants should not handle horses they are not authorized or trained to handle.
- Known behavioral concerns should be communicated to appropriate personnel.

Facility & Equipment Safety

Facilities and equipment shall be maintained in a condition that does not present an unreasonable safety hazard. Damaged or unsafe equipment shall be removed from service or clearly identified as out of service until repaired. Including but not limited to, barns, stalls, arenas, fencing, gates, saddles, trailers, tools, and all other equipment used by the program.

Training & Competency

Participants shall not be permitted to independently perform activities for which they have not demonstrated appropriate knowledge, skill, or competency.

Minimum Program Training Requirements:

- Initial safety orientation –Location & Program-specific details; include emergency response overview
- Activity-specific training
- PPE specific training
- 2+ people trained in First Aid/CPR & AED
- Demonstrated competency for high-risk tasks
- Refresher training when necessary

Environmental Conditions

Activities shall be modified, postponed, or suspended when environmental conditions create an unacceptable risk to participants or animals.

Extreme Heat

Avoid or modify horse-related activities during extreme heat, particularly strenuous work or riding. Provide adequate water, electrolytes, shade, rest breaks, and monitor both people and horses for signs of heat stress.

Cold

Use appropriate cold-weather clothing and adjust or postpone activities when temperatures create a risk of cold stress, frostbite, or hypothermia. Provide appropriate shelter and protection for horses as conditions require.

Lightning

Suspend outdoor horse activities when lightning is present or thunderstorms are approaching. Move personnel and horses to a safe, enclosed location and resume activities only after conditions have cleared.

Severe Weather

Monitor weather conditions and postpone or suspend activities when severe weather, including high winds, heavy precipitation, hail, flooding, or extreme storms, create unsafe conditions. Establish a plan for sheltering personnel and securing horses and equipment.

Smoke/Poor Air Quality

Monitor air quality during periods of wildfire smoke or other significant airborne pollution and modify or suspend activities when conditions may affect the health of personnel or horses. Avoid strenuous outdoor activities when air quality is poor.

Dust

Minimize exposure to excessive dust during activities such as arena work, riding, sweeping, or handling hay and bedding. Use appropriate controls, such as ventilation, dust suppression, or respiratory protection when warranted. If respiratory protection is required, the USU Respiratory Protection Program must be followed for regulatory compliance. Call EH&S for further information and guidance.

Poor Footing

Evaluate footing before and during horse activities and address conditions such as mud, ice, loose material, standing water, uneven terrain, or excessively hard surfaces. Modify or discontinue activities when footing presents an increased risk of slips, trips, or falls.

Remote Locations

Activities conducted in remote areas should have a field safety plan established. The plan must include appropriate communication, emergency response, and location-sharing procedures. **Check-in plans must be established with a designated person who remains outside the field area.** Personnel must have access to reliable communication and emergency supplies, and supervisors should know the route to the planned work location, methods of travel, and expected return time.

Emergency Preparedness

Each program must have:

- Emergency contacts list
- Emergency procedures formed
- Communication pathways available to all participants
- Check-in procedures established
- First-aid supplies, including AED and Stop the Bleed Kit or tourniquet

- Location/address information for emergency responders
- Procedures for response to medical emergencies
- Procedures for loose or escaped horses
- Plan for sudden fire/emergency evacuation

Incident & Near-Miss Reporting

All employee and student injuries, horse-related incidents, property damage, and significant near misses shall be reported in accordance with applicable USU reporting requirements.

Stop Work Authority

Any employee, instructor, or participant has the authority and responsibility to stop an activity when they reasonably believe an immediate safety hazard exists. Activities shall not resume until the hazard has been evaluated and appropriate controls have been implemented.

Documentation Requirements

Programs should maintain, as applicable:

- Training records
- Inspection records
- Participant competency records
- Field Safety Plans
- Incident reports
- Equipment maintenance records
- Emergency plans

Related Documents

- Horse Handling & Riding Safety SOP
- PPE for Horse Riding SOP
- Emergency Response SOP
- Facility & Equipment Inspection SOP
- Participant Training Requirements SOP
- USU Incident Reporting Procedures

Review and Revision

The 'Horse Program Safety Guidelines' shall be reviewed periodically by the office of Environmental Health & Safety and updated as needed to reflect changes in university

requirements, program activities, applicable regulations, or recognized best safety practices.

Document Information

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