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"Be prepared for an emergency in your barn or stable"

Nothing impresses me more than a clean, well organized facility. A properly maintained stable can reduce risk of injury to you and your horse. There are three important steps to making your barn and stable facility safe.

- 1. Spot the Hazard:** Actively look for and identify potential problems on a regular basis.
- 2. Assess the Danger:** What type of injuries or damage could the hazard cause?
- 3. Make the Changes:** Repair, replace or make a plan for a safer procedure.

Barn and Aisle Safety

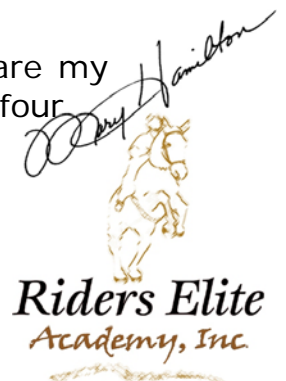
Minimize clutter in your aisle ways. Store pitch forks, shovels and muck buckets safely out of the way. Proper storage eliminates tripping hazards and extends the working life of your tools.

Good lighting is imperative, especially in areas where you examine your horse for injuries. Install light fixtures that protect the light bulb and make sure they are located out of reach of your horse.

Windows are essential for light and ventilation. Urine and decaying organic material produce ammonia and other gasses. Adequate ventilation prevents respiratory problems associated with these gases. Consider installing exhaust fans to improve air flow.



Cross ties with emergency release snaps are my first choice for tying. My next selection is a four



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bolt ring attached to a secure post. If you must tie to a fence, tie to a sturdy fence post not a rail. Always use a quick release knot and never tie with the reins of a bridle.

Chemicals

Know the chemical makeup of the products you use. This includes pesticides, medicines, cleansers and weed spray. Read the labels to mix them accurately and clean up any spills. Safely store your chemicals in their original labeled container inside a locked cabinet. Wear the recommended personal protective equipment such as respirator, mask and gloves when using these products.

Fire Safety

Hay, straw, dust, electrical cords and equipment in a barn can pose a fire risk. Remove cobwebs and dust on a regular basis. Inspect and test electrical wiring and appliances like clippers, fans and vacuums. Install fire alarms and smoke detectors. Strategically place fire extinguishers through out your facility and learn how to use them. Develop and practice a fire drill evacuation procedure. Establish an ongoing, effective rodent control program; mice and other rodents chew on electrical wiring.



Pasture and Turnout Area

Inspect your pasture and turnout area for loose wire, protruding nails, toxic plants and other hazards. Check your fencing for broken rails, missing post caps and weak points. Poorly maintained fencing can risk injury to your horse and could allow escape onto a roadway or other dangerous area.

Your local agricultural extension agent can familiarize you with local species of toxic plants. Learn to recognize these plants and remove them by digging them up or using an herbicide.





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Rehearse an Emergency Action Plan



Often when I arrive on the scene of an emergency people will comment, "I didn't know what to do," or "I didn't know the ambulance would have its lights and siren on." Rehearse an emergency action plan to work out any problems in advance. Post emergency phone numbers for police, fire, veterinarian, farrier and other emergency contacts at all phone locations. All riders should dismount and move to safety during an emergency.

Anticipate your horse's reaction to the flashing lights, noise and commotion a real emergency brings. Learn basic first aid skills to provide care until the professionals arrive. Check your first aid kits both human and horse. Are they well stocked and easily accessible? Know who you can count on to keep a cool head and lend a helping hand. Have a trailer available for emergency evacuation or trip to the veterinary hospital.

Preventable Tragedy

Lack of knowledge or taking shortcuts often leads us into trouble. See how many safety hazards you can identify in this tragedy. I responded to a call of a horse accident near a busy highway. A horse owner allowed an inexperienced guest to ride her horse. The guest tied the horse to the top rail of an old wooden fence. Not knowing how to tie an emergency release knot she instead tied a large, bulky knot with the lead rope. The horse spooked, pulling off the top rail of the fence. Compounding the crisis, a front leg got caught between the two lower rails. The horse struggled to free itself, breaking its leg off at the knee. In shock, the loose horse, its front leg amputated and bleeding, hobbled on three legs toward the busy highway, dragging the fence rail by the lead rope. That's when I arrived. The owner was in tears and clearly not prepared. She said, "I didn't know what to do in an emergency".





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Plan, Practice and Post

Have an emergency action plan in place and practice it. That means, knowing what to do, who to call for help, where your first aid supplies are located and how to use them properly. Post this information for others to read. Be on constant alert for hazards in your barn and stable area. Evaluate the hazard's potential danger. If you see a problem, take action, and don't just walk past. Make corrective changes to repair and replace hazardous items. Protect your facility from the danger, inconvenience and expense of preventable accidents.

