

September 2019 Update

Fall Weather Preparedness, Fire Safety, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, and More!

Fall Weather Preparedness

September is [National Preparedness Month](#), providing a great opportunity review your facility's emergency preparedness plans with your staff. With the fall season officially upon us, it's particularly important to review and update your plans relating to fall weather.

Along with the continuing hurricane season, fall brings a number of [weather concerns](#) including:

- Drought
- Flood
- Fog
- Tsunamis
- Wind
- Winter Weather
- Wildfire

Colder weather also means increased use of heating equipment and with it additional safety concerns. If you haven't done so already, this is the perfect time to check review fire safety plans with personnel. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA)'s [Barn Fire Safety Checklist](#) is a great place to start. See below for additional information on Fire Safety Standards for Zoos and Aquariums.

Fire Safety Standards For Zoos and Aquariums

Contribution by Ajay Gulati, P.E., Fire Protection Engineer, Smithsonian's National Zoo

The zoo industry is always asking the question "Are there any fire protection and life safety codes and standards that we can use for our zoo designs?" The is YES! NFPA 150!

NFPA 150, *Fire and Life Safety in Animal Housing Facilities Code* establishes life and safety requirements for both humans and animals in all types of animal housing facilities. New to the 2019 edition are individual chapters for each category of animal housing. Chapter 15 specifically addresses animal exhibition/public viewing facilities such as zoos and covers some of the unique challenges such as animal sensitivity to fire alarm horns. Also, NFPA 150 has recently been referenced in NFPA 1, *Fire Code* and has started to gain traction in the last few years. We are excited to see improvements in animal housing fire safety as 150 continues to be utilized.

To find out more click on the following link:

<https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards/detail?code=150>

You can also contact Ajay Gulati, P.E at gulatia@si.edu who is the Chair for this code and the Fire Protection Engineer for the National Zoo if you have specific questions about fire protection and life safety at zoos.

Eastern Equine Encephalitis

Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) is a relatively rare zoonotic disease caused by a virus

that is transmitted by mosquitoes. Birds are the normal hosts of the virus: when a mosquito bites an infected bird, it can pick up virus particles with the blood meal, then other mammals are bitten and infected. Mammals are considered to be 'dead end' host as virus numbers don't become sufficiently concentrated to infect naive mosquitoes.

This year, there are an increased number of cases of EEE being diagnosed in humans and animals. In humans, there are two types of illness:

- The 'systemic' infection results in a severe flu-like illness that lasts 1-2 weeks, from which patients typically recover completely.
- The 'encephalitic' form has a rapid onset of severe nervous system disease and approximately **one third** of people with EEE die from the infection. Individuals with neurologic disease that survive may have long-lasting neurological problems.

Cases of disease in animals and humans have been confirmed in a number of states in the Gulf, Atlantic, and Great Lakes regions. To date there have been 8 human fatalities from EEE and a number of fatalities in horses. Core vaccination protocols in horses include EEE vaccine, many of the horses who have died had incomplete vaccination histories. There is currently not an EEE vaccine for humans.

For more information on EEE, see the [CDC web page](#) and the [Infectious Disease Manual: Infectious Diseases of Concern to Captive and Free Ranging Wildlife](#), an official publication of the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians.

Preparedness Focus: Be Informed

September's preparedness focus is [being informed](#). Getting correct information to all visitors, staff, and volunteers who may be on grounds during an emergency is the key to enabling them to take safe action. Consider the following:

- What type of emergency alert system do you have on grounds?
 - Do all staff and volunteers know what action to take when there is an alert?
 - Can alerts be clearly heard anywhere on grounds?
- Can all guests understand and act on alerts?
 - Does your alert system include accommodations for how to notify guests who are deaf or hard of hearing?
 - Does your alert system include accommodations for guests who do not speak English?

If you are just getting started with planning, consider looking to our [Contingency Planning Modules](#) for more industry specific information. Additional information on crisis communication plans for businesses is available on [ready.gov](#).

[Do 1 Thing](#), a non-profit organization that aims to build more disaster resilient communities, asks the community to do one "thing" to enhance preparedness each month.

Zoo and Aquarium All Hazards Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Fusion Center
301-562-0777 ext. 114 | <http://zahp.aza.org>