



## Highlights:

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# The InfoGram

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## EMS Response to Butane Hash Incidents

One of the results of easier access to marijuana is an increase in the production of butane hash oil (BHO). Known by a variety of names, BHO is made by extracting compounds from marijuana plant material using butane gas, then concentrating the compounds by evaporating the gas.

BHO is dangerous in two ways: the production process can easily lead to fires and explosions, and the material produces a very strong high which can cause erratic or psychotic behavior in the user. Of these, the burns and blunt force trauma from butane explosions have so far won out as the bigger issue.

Response recommendations have mostly focused on fire suppression and explosions, but a recent [article in JEMS focuses more on what EMS personnel needs to know](#). The article outlines four case studies, all of which happened in one California emergency department in a 3-week period, again focusing on the burns patients.

EMS workers in areas reporting these types of incidents should educate themselves on signs of BHO production to include butane canisters, Pyrex-style glass plates, extraction tubes (often capped PVC pipe with holes in each end), and solvents and should know manufacture can just as easily be in cars or vans as buildings.

Officer safety is also important in these cases. Ensure the gas levels inside the structure or vehicle are no longer volatile, and safely ventilate if they are not. Medical training should also be up to date on burn injuries, blunt trauma, blast injuries, and paranoid psychosis.

(Source: [JEMS](#))

## Planning for Animals in Disasters

Many people created headlines and controversy when they refused to evacuate without their pets during Hurricane Katrina and again during Hurricane Sandy. For better or worse, [the culture has shifted when it comes to emergency planning and animals](#) and emergency management is changing with it.

But you have a larger problem than just pets. Mega farms, family farms, zoos,

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smaller wild animal parks, [veterinarian practices](#), [animal labs](#), and community rescues or shelters all pose their own set of planning needs for the animals in their care.

Start by contacting the businesses directly to see if they have plans already written and help them create plans if they don't. Even if they do, it is a good idea to go over them together to see if they (or you) have any gaps or problems in the plans and expectations. The American Humane Association (AHA) offers consulting services to emergency managers to assist in learning the needs of animals in disasters, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency has some [training available](#).

Contacting local [veterinarians](#) is also advisable as many rescued animals will have medical needs and injuries after a disaster and will require attention. In addition, the [Veterinary Medical Assistance Team](#) (VMAT) program provides volunteers to care for animals during and after a crisis.

The AHA operates the [Animal Emergency Services](#) program, started in 1916. Operated out of an 82-foot tractor trailer complete with a mobile veterinary surgical suite, living accommodations for 12, and satellite capabilities, the team responds to major and minor disasters as well as mass animal neglect cases.

Finally, planning shelters for animals is a very complex job as, depending on your location, you may need to plan for a variety of pets as well as farm animals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a [resource page on disasters](#). North Carolina has an [Equine Evacuation and Sheltering Plan](#) (PDF, 485 Kb) which can be used as a guide when creating your own plan for large animals.

(Source: [AHA](#))

## 2016 Wildfire Mitigation Awards

The [Wildfire Mitigation Awards](#) are now taking nominations for the 2016 period. These awards are a great way to recognize people and organizations providing outstanding service in wildfire preparedness and safety in your community while increasing public awareness of the problem.

You may nominate for these three categories:

- Community Wildfire Preparedness Pioneer
- Fire Adapted Communities Fire Service Leadership
- Wildfire Mitigation Innovation

This is a joint program between the U.S. Forest Service and several national-level associations. Examples of 2015 honorees include [Saws and Slaws'](#) program in Colorado, [Living with Fire Program](#) in Nevada, and [Firewise of Southwest Colorado](#).

(Source: [Wildfire Mitigation Awards](#))