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FARMERS URGED TO PREPARE FOR HURRICANE SANDY

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Hurricane Sandy is currently moving through the Caribbean and is projected to move northward off the eastern Florida coast in the next two days. Although it is still too early to determine Sandy’s precise long-term track, computer models are now trending to show impacts to the northeastern portion of the United States. These models predict that Sandy will potentially transition over the weekend into a powerful nor’easter and make landfall on the Eastern Seaboard early next week. It is likely that Sandy will travel inland to Vermont, bringing along with it strong winds, heavy rain, and possibly snow. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) urges farmers to prepare now for power outages and flooding. Preparations farmers should do quickly include:

Crop-related Activities:

- Harvest standing crops if they are not in yet (corn).
- Harvest vegetable crops that are still in the field.
- Producers growing greenhouse crops should anticipate loss of water and prepare accordingly.

Power and Food/Water Activities:

- Anticipate power outages. Check to see that your generator is in good working order. Consider purchasing a generator if you currently don’t have one.
- In the event you require a generator for emergency agricultural purposes (i.e. milking cows, cooling milk tanks, poultry house ventilation), contact your Town Officials. Make sure your house or barn has been wired such that a generator could be connected and that you have a transfer switch or other isolated means to connect to the generator.
- Purchase sufficient amounts of fuel to operate your generator and other equipment on the farm. *VAAFM does not have generators to loan.
- Charge batteries on cell phones and cameras.
- Pump and store adequate supplies of drinking water for humans and animals in the likelihood of power outages. VAAFM recommends a minimum 36-hour reserve.

Livestock Activities:

- Check feed inventory and order extra if needed. Move feed, including round bales to higher ground, or to a more accessible place in case of flooding or transportation problems.
- Determine the best places for livestock on your property, where they have the best chance of being free from flying debris, heavy winds and rain. This may mean moving livestock and poultry to higher ground if possible or sheltering them in securely battened barns, houses or tightly fenced areas.
Equipment Activities:

- Secure or remove items or equipment that could become blowing debris.
- Remove hoop houses from low-lying areas that could be subject to high water.
- Move equipment to the highest, open ground possible away from trees or buildings.

General Preparedness:

- Make a list of important phone numbers ahead of time in order to make calls following a storm. Numbers to include are your town Emergency Management District, county extension agent, insurance agent, county Farm Service Agency and private veterinarian.

These were important phone numbers during Hurricane Irene:

- Call 911 if you need immediate assistance from the police, fire department or ambulance.
- Farmers in need of Emergency Agricultural Assistance call Town Officials.
- For non-emergency resource assistance farmers should call 211.
- To report farm losses call USDA Farm Service Agency 1-802-658-2803.
- To report damage to your home or barn call 1-800-621-FEMA.
- For information about road closures call 511.
- If you have any additional questions call the Vermont Agency of Agriculture at 1-802-828-5667.