

# Non-profit taking in horses endangered by wildfires

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Wildfires are spreading quickly throughout parts of Montana and if smoke and fire are closing in on your area, you now have a place to take your horses to keep them safe.

The Montana Awareness Education and Equine Rehab Association, or MAERA, is a non-profit organization based in Belgrade which plans on taking in hundreds of horses within the next few days.

"I didn't know if I was going to have to evacuate my whole household. I wasn't sure if we were going to have to pick up valuables and do the big push out of there so I wanted to make sure that my horses were going to be safe," said Elizabeth David, a horse owner who brought all seven of her horses to MAERA on Tuesday afternoon after a pre-evacuation order was put into effect for her area along the lower Madison River.

"I figured that if my nose and eyes were burning, that their noses and eyes were burning," said David.

MAERA's Executive Director, Sasha Hyland said, "there was a danger in Elizabeth's location and there was a lot of horses that didn't make it from that location. She took the initiative to bring her horses here even before they were totally evacuated."

MEARA has room to house an additional 150 horses indoors and more than 200 more in outdoor pens. The organization is extending their free services to all communities in Montana and will provide transportation for horses if need be.

"The greatest need right now is just getting this place ready because for the rest of the fire season in Montana we're going to be really full and really busy," said Hyland.

MAERA is looking for volunteers to help set up for the large crowds they expect to start coming in and anyone who is willing to donate hay and fencing supplies.

If you're interested in volunteering you may contact Hyland directly at (406) 600-3756 or the ranch phone (406) 551-4913. They are also taking in any horses that are lost or were set free. If you are looking for a horse that was lost during evacuations you can check their web site to see if it was turned in to MAERA.