

Submitter: Tina Andersen
On Behalf Of: Polk County Fair
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Capital Construction
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1601

Polk County Fair Emergency Facility

The Polk County Fairgrounds is so much more than a 4-day Fair and 700 events. It is an emergency facility for evacuation. It has large walk-in coolers and several separate refrigeration units which has been used for not only food but for medication. It has a back up generator that can run the Main Building and Building B which includes a commercial kitchen and showers. The current electrical system will only let half of the Main Building run until it can be updated. The fairgrounds have room and a good base to land helicopters on in case the bridge to Salem is not accessible. In the late 1980's there was a huge fire up in Valsetz, the fairgrounds were home to 275 firefighters while fighting the fires. The fairgrounds provided them areas to sleep, take showers and a kitchen full of food.

1996 Flood – The fairgrounds had 300 evacuees staying in our Main Building for a week – Fair staff donated their time and food and did 3 meals a day for two weeks until they could get back into their homes.

2020 COVID – The fairgrounds were used for testing, vaccinations, food give away for those who couldn't work. Our County Court used the fairgrounds to hold court and keep everyone 6' apart. Salem Health moved into one of our buildings for several weeks.

2020 Wildfire – We took in 400 animals. 75 Families for 4 weeks. Had a place for any evacuees to come and get food, household items and clothing. Opened our kitchen for volunteers to come in and feed everyone. Polk County residents donated thousands of items brought to the fairgrounds to be given to those in need. The fairgrounds also had a trailer with 2 washers and dryers brought in and plugged into our septic dump so that the families staying at the fairgrounds did not have to leave and pay to do their laundry.

2025 Flooding – Red Cross trucks set up in our parking lot to get needed items to those effected. The space was big enough to bring in 18 wheelers and unload them into smaller pickups to be taken where needed.

The fairgrounds are also the reunification site for several schools in Polk County. If the schools need to evacuate, the facility is set up to bring busses in and unload the students into our buildings and has plenty of room for parents to pick them up safely.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Tina Andersen

Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center, Manager