



HOUSTON ZOO, INC.
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

HOUSTON ZOO CODE 99 ANIMAL ESCAPE AND INCIDENT PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION

This protocol addresses the following “Code 99” situations:

- 1) Animal escapes: any incident where an animal is outside of its containment and outside of animal care staff’s control
- 2) An animal in an enclosure with compromised containment (i.e. tree falls into enclosure, damaged containment barriers, etc.)
- 3) Unauthorized guests in animal enclosures while animals are present in the same space
- 4) Staff trapped or injured in a dangerous animal’s enclosure with animal(s) still present

In all of these situations, the following must be considered in this order:

- Safety of humans (staff, volunteers, guests)
- Animal welfare – safe and quick containment of the situation, making every attempt to avoid termination of the animal

Definition of Terms

Ranger Control Center South Admin Building, includes the offices for the Director of Safety & Security, Rangers and the camera control room.

Guest Relations (formerly “Base” or “Dispatch”): **North** Admin Building, functions as *Guest Services* during normal business hours.

Gate 1: The main employee access gate from Cambridge Road, always staffed by a Ranger.

Incident Manager: Zoo Curator, Animal Supervisor or Veterinarian responsible for leading & coordinating the response to the Code 99 incident.

CODE 99 PROCEDURES

If you encounter an escaped animal or an unauthorized person in an animal enclosure:

- 1) As the first responder, you immediately announce the **Code 99 in one of the following ways:**
 - Via radio on the ANIMALS Channel
 - Call Ranger Control Center at **6899** from a zoo phone, **713-533-6899** from a cell phone, or on RANGERS channel via radio (RANGERS should switch to the ANIMAL channel once they receive call)
 - If a radio or telephone is not available, you should assign another person to assist in making this contact. This could include other staff, volunteers or even the use of a guest's cell phone.

- 2) The following information should be included in the call, if known:
 - **Nature of the incident** (animal out of containment or a person in an enclosure)
 - **Species of animal or animal description**
 - **Location**
 - **Direction of travel if animal is moving**
 - Example: "Code 99 orangutan at the entrance to Wortham World of Primates, animal is moving toward Cypress Circle Concessions"

- 3) If you can do so safely, take the following steps:
 - Instruct unauthorized staff or guests to stay out of the area
 - Keep the animal in view without compromising personal safety
 - Continue to communicate with the Ranger Control Center and the Animal Care staff on the ANIMAL channel; remember to keep it short but informative, so as not to unnecessarily occupy radio time
 - Remain in position until relieved or otherwise instructed

If you hear a Code 99 call:

- 1) Respond as directed by Incident Manager, according to your Team Assignment (see below)
 - Team 1: Incident Manager and animal care staff assisting with recovery of animal
 - Team 2: assist with moving guests out of the area and securing gates
 - Team 3: remain at your location and assist with communication if directed to do so
 - If you are unsure of your assignment, proceed to a safe area and wait for instructions

- 2) DO NOT:
 - Panic or risk your own personal safety

- Approach an escaped animal; all animals are potentially dangerous
 - Go to the scene unless directed
- 3) REMEMBER: the FIREARMS and Veterinary Dart Teams will be responding with dangerous weapons and drugs so it is important to stay clear of the area.
 - 4) Only emergency communications pertaining to the Code 99 are to be transmitted over the ANIMALS Channel during an animal escape.
 - 5) The Ranger Staff will utilize the Emergency Channel to transmit critical information to all staff radios. All staff should switch to the ANIMALS Channel unless otherwise instructed. This will remain in effect until the Incident Manager instructs otherwise or until the code has been declared clear.
 - 6) A Curator or Supervisor or other experienced animal staff member, as indicated below, must declare themselves as the Incident Manager and immediately determine and communicate the Code 99 and species involved. The incident manager will then dictate the need for FIREARMS and Veterinary DART teams. If an animal is partially contained, is not dangerous, and/or recapture may take an extended period of time, the Incident Manager will advise of appropriate radio communication procedures. The Incident Manager will advise staff if they are able to continue their normal work activities while remaining away from the area of disturbance.

RESPONSE TEAMS

Every employee in the Zoo will be on one of three response teams in the event of an animal escape or dangerous animal incident as described above. **It is important to remember that how you respond to an incident is based on who you are and where you are at the time of the incident.**

Team 1: Animal Recovery (ANIMALS Radio Channel)

Team Leader: Incident Manager (Curator, Animal Supervisor, or Veterinarian, or another experienced animal care team member as described below)

This team consists of the FIREARMS Team, Veterinary Dart Team, animal care staff from the section involved, and the VP of Animal Operations. The role of this team is to recapture escaped animals and/or resolve situations in which unauthorized personnel are in animal

enclosures with animals present. In order to facilitate communication to all Zoo staff the Incident Manager should assign a communications liaison to assist with all interdepartmental communications.

Note: Communications Liaison should not be directly involved in the animal recovery to ensure that they are able to carry out communications duties.

Team 2: Safety and Security (RANGERS Radio Channel)

Team Leader: Director of Safety & Security or Ranger Supervisor

This team includes the Team Leader, Rangers, all other animal care staff not on Team 1, and all staff out on grounds at the time of the incident. If you are a staff member on zoo grounds at the time of incident, but you are not part of the animal care team or the ranger team, the only expectation here is that you assist as many guests to safe locations as possible while you are on your way to a safe location. There is no expectation for you to continue leaving a safe location to assist guests or other staff

The primary responsibilities of this team are to secure Zoo gates, crowd control and/or moving guests to safe areas. This team would also coordinate a Zoo-wide evacuation if necessary (see HZI Zoo Wide Evacuation Procedures).

Team 3: Communication (RANGERS Channel)

Team Leader(s): Ranger Control Center, Director of Public Relations, Ranger Supervisor, or Auxiliary North Administration staff.

This team includes Public Relations, Ranger Control Center, Admissions, Membership (if located at the front gate), and all staff not out on grounds at the time of the incident. The primary responsibility of this team is communication with staff and external entities. The ability to monitor the ANIMALS Channel is critical and a second person at the Ranger Control Center will be required in order to do so.

STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

Team	Primary Role(s)	Staff Assigned
Team 1 Recovery/Resolution	Animal recovery or personnel recovery from animal enclosure	Leader: Incident Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIREARMS Response Team • Veterinary Dart Team • Animal care staff from section involved • VP of Animal Operations
Team 2 Safety and Security	Secure Zoo and personnel	Leader: Director of Safety & Security or Ranger Supervisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rangers • Ranger Control Center • Other Animal Care staff • All staff out on grounds at the time of the incident.
Team 3 Communication	Communicate with staff and outside the Zoo	Leaders: Ranger Control Center, Director of PR, or a Ranger Supervisor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranger Control Center + 1 Ranger to Assist • Public Relations • Admissions • Membership (if located at the front gate) • All staff not out on grounds at the time of the incident.

TEAM 1: ANIMAL RECOVERY/RESOLUTION

Team Leader: Incident Manager (Curator, Animal Supervisor, or Veterinarian, or another experienced animal care team member as described below)

This team consists of the FIREARMS Team, Veterinary Dart Team, animal care staff from the section involved, and the VP of Animal Operations. The role of this team is to recapture escaped animals and/or resolve situations in which unauthorized personnel are in animal enclosures with animals present.

Animal recovery alternatives include:

- Attempt to contain the animal in a safe area, defined as an area that minimizes the threat to human life and maximizes the opportunity to recapture the animal
- Herding, physical or mechanical restraint
- Chemical immobilization
- Termination of the animal

Incident Manager

The Incident Manager coordinates the animal recovery or incident resolution process and determines the appropriate method of containment/recapture/resolution. If possible and as safety allows, the Incident Manager will collaborate with the Zoo's CEO/President or VP of Animal Operations to make the decision as to whether and when to terminate an animal. If neither of these persons are available, the Incident Manager should collaborate with the highest ranking member of the senior leadership team on site.

He or she is responsible for alerting Ranger Control Center and designating someone to call the Houston Police Department in the event the animal leaves Zoo property. He or she is responsible for calling the "all clear" when the incident is resolved and also for convening a debriefing meeting to analyze the incident and its resolution within seven days. A confidential written report of the incident must be generated within five working days and distributed to the Zoo's CEO & President, Vice President of Animal Operations, Director of Safety & Security, Director of Public Relations, Area Curator, and Area Supervisors.

The Incident Manager coordinates the activities of the recovery or resolution operation and is the interface for the Communications Team. He or she may call for additional assistance and/or assign staff to other teams as needed. The Incident Manager will determine whether zoo evacuation is necessary and alert Gate One and Ranger Control Center whether to close perimeter gates.

During business hours, one of the following will assume the role of Incident Manager, in order of preference:

- 1) Section Curator
- 2) Section Supervisor
- 3) Curator or Supervisor from another Section with assistance from a Section Keeper
- 4) Other Animal Programs supervisory staff (Curators, Supervisors, and Veterinarians); the VP of Animal Operations, or Director of Safety & Security can also serve as Incident Managers if necessary.

After business hours, one of the following will assume the role of Incident Manager, in order of preference:

- 1) ACDM if not the only FIREARMS team member on site
- 2) Escaped animals most senior or experienced keeper on site
- 3) Other animal programs supervisory staff (curators, supervisors, and veterinarians); the VP of Animal Operations, or Director of Safety & Security can also serve as Incident Managers if necessary.

FIREARMS and Veterinary Dart Teams

Upon a Code 99 alert and at the direction of the incident manager (or best judgement of the FIREARMS team members), the FIREARMS Team will access the firearms cabinets and the Veterinary Dart Team will begin preparing for chemical immobilization of the escaped animal(s) unless or until called off by the Incident Manager. Each Dart Team consists of a Zoo Veterinarian and 1-2 other Vet-identified staff, typically a Veterinary Technician or Keeper. Both teams will respond to the scene unless otherwise instructed and wait for instructions by the Incident Manager.

The FIREARMS Team members should respond as a member of Team 1 even if weapons are not required. Only members of the FIREARMS Team have keys to the firearms cabinets.

Guidelines for the Use of Firearms in an Animal Incident

The use of firearms in the event of an animal escape is limited to certified members of the HZI FIREARMS Team. The FIREARMS team member and/ or Incident Manager will make the determination to terminate an animal's life, with approval from the Zoo's CEO/President or VP of Animal Operations when possible, and only in the event of imminent threat to human life, imminent threat to another specimen in the collection, or imminent threat of a dangerous or injurious animal leaving HZI property.

In rare situations, there may not be time to secure permission from either the Incident Manager CEO/President, or the VP of Animal Operations and the FIREARMS member may need to make a split-second decision to dispatch an animal in order to save human life or prevent a dangerous animal from leaving Zoo property. The decision to dispatch an animal must be clearly communicated to all personnel at the scene.

- FIREARMS Team personnel will access the firearms cabinets, as set out in the Firearms Training Response Team Manual. They will retrieve the appropriate weapons and will be deployed to a stand-by location to await further instructions from the Incident Manager. For animal escapes after-hours, weapons will be accessed at the Clinic only.

- At the instruction of the Incident Manager, the Veterinary Dart Team will be deployed to a stand-by location to await further instructions. The Veterinary Dart Team should be escorted by FIREARMS Team members with loaded weapons.
- When possible, each weapon will have a two-person team, one shooter and one spotter. The spotter may be armed or unarmed. It is the duty of the spotter to assist the shooter as necessary and maintain communication with the incident manager.
- Ideally, two FIREARMS Teams would be dispatched for each event.
- Each team must have a radio and must communicate their location to the Incident Manager and to each other regularly.
- All shots fired are the responsibility of the shooter and should be followed to their final resting point.
- All shots will be made with the intent of dispatching the animal in as quick and humane way as possible. There will be no “warning shots” used.

Animal Care Staff

If it is safe to do so, animal care staff from the Section involved in the incident will assemble equipment, report to the scene, and begin the recovery/resolution process based on direction from the Incident Manager. All other animal care staff is to assist as members of the Safety and Security Team unless otherwise directed by their Team Leader or the Incident Manager.

All employees on the Recovery Team will have a radio or be in the company of someone with a radio. All radio communications related to the recovery/resolution effort will be via ANIMALS Channel, which will be restricted to emergency information only. Public address announcements may be made as directed by the Director of Safety & Security or the senior member of the leadership team in his/her absence.

Staff members that are not on Team 1 should **NOT** report to the scene of the incident unless expressly requested to do so by the Incident Manager.

TEAM 2: SAFETY AND SECURITY

Team Leader: Director of Safety & Security or Ranger Supervisor

This team includes the Team Leader, Rangers, all other animal care staff not on Team 1, and all staff out on grounds at the time of the incident. The primary responsibilities of this team are to secure Zoo gates and to assist with crowd control and/or moving guests to safe areas. This team would also coordinate a Zoo-wide evacuation if necessary.

Priority actions:

- Secure perimeter gates at the direction of the Incident Manager
- Establish a safe perimeter for the Code 99 response
- Communicate information to guests and other staff members
- Move guests to safe areas

Gates

Staff may be requested by the Incident Manager to secure the Gate One (1), Front Entry Gate (10), or the West Gate (3). In the event of a dangerous animal escape, no one should be allowed to enter Gate One without permission from the Incident Manager. All perimeter gates to the Zoo should be checked and monitored if it is safe to do so. Ranger Staff in the vicinity of the Front Gate should then proceed to Guest Relations to assist with communication and access issues.

At the discretion of the Incident Manager, staff and guests may be permitted to exit the Zoo. No one will be permitted to enter the Zoo without the approval of the Incident Manager.

Guest Safety

All staff not on Team 1 that is on Zoo grounds at the time of the incident will work to move guests to a safe area while maintaining personal safety. Staff should calmly communicate the situation to guests and direct them to the appropriate areas.

For the purposes of this policy, short-term outside contractors and their employees are to be treated as guests, as are Volunteers and Docents. Long-term contractors such as SSA may be included in Team 2 and Team 3 assignments.

The Incident Manager will interface with the Communications Team to deliver instructions. The initial priority will be to move guests from the immediate area of the animal or the incident. Depending on the species involved, the Incident Manager may instruct Team 2 to evacuate the Zoo and/or move staff and guests to secure buildings. Secure animal buildings

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include the Aquarium, the Reptile House, interior areas of the Brown Education Center, Natural Encounters, Tropical bird house, Giraffe holding, Animal Ambassador Building, and the Swap Shop. Other secure buildings include (but are not limited to): North Administration, South Administration, Restaurants, Employee Break Trailer, and any other areas as directed by the Safety & Security Team.

If the escape or incident poses no risk to guests or staff, the Incident Manager may elect to just cordon off the affected area. Team 2 would then assist with guest communications.

TEAM 3: COMMUNICATION

Team Leader(s): Ranger Control Center, Guest Relations, Gate One, and Director of Public Relations

This team includes Public Relations, Ranger Control Center, and all staff not out on grounds at the time of the incident. The primary responsibility of this team is communication with staff and external entities.

Priority actions:

- Assist Ranger Control Center with radio and phone communications
- Notify staff on grounds
- Notify appropriate staff off grounds
- Address guest questions
- Address media inquiries (with approval of the Zoo's CEO/President)
- Communicate with the Houston Police Department as necessary

Guest Relations:

Ranger closest to Front Entry Gate (10) should proceed to Guest Relations to assist attendant with assignments as needed. In addition Admissions and Membership staff at the Front Gate should proceed to Guest Relations and assist with communications, crowd control, and other duties as assigned.

During Zoo Hours

The first person discovering the incident should have immediately announced the code via radio or Ranger Control Center at "6899," as described on Page 2 of this document.

Ranger Control Center will announce the code over all radio channels and the telephone intercom system and will instruct all staff to switch to ANIMALS Channel and to refrain from any non-emergency communications.

Before/After Hours

If there is no response from the Ranger Control Center, communications may be made to Gate 1 by calling "6639" or by calling the direct Rangers After-Hours cell phone at 713-203-5695. If the Ranger Control Center is not manned, a Ranger will be required to get there quickly (if safe to do so) to announce the situation over the PA system if appropriate.

Communication Sequence

Ranger Control Center will contact emergency response personnel in the following order. Ranger Control Center may recruit a second individual to assist with communications (typically Gate 1 or North Administration Building staff).

- Curator and Supervisor(s) of the respective area
- Veterinary Staff
- Vice President of Animal Operations
- Director of Safety & Security
- Chief Operating Officer
- Zoo CEO & President
- Announced over phone intercom system (if during normal working hours)
- Director of Public Affairs

Ranger Control Center or his/her designee is responsible for notifying staff of the status of the recovery effort.

Media

The Public Affairs Department will handle all media communication, in consultation with the Zoo's Management Team.

All Other Staff

All other staff members are to remain at their locations and monitor ANIMALS Channel unless instructed otherwise by the Incident Manager or until the "all clear" is communicated. Staff that is not on Team 1 should **NOT** report to the scene of the incident unless expressly requested to do so by the Incident Manager.

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