**Name of Organization**

**Disaster Recovery**

**Facilitator Guide**

**Tabletop Exercise**

December 2021

**Revision History**

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**Instructions**

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**Disaster Recovery**

**Facilitator Guide – Tabletop Exercise**

# Introduction

This facilitator guide provides you with all you need to conduct the [Organization] Disaster Recovery Tabletop Exercise. This scenario focuses on Disaster Recovery, highlighting the various community partners (that encompass both private organizations and response agencies) that would have a role in policy level decision making and incident response to an incident at or near the organization.

# Exercise Goals, Objectives, and Core Capabilities

**Overall Goal**

Improve [Organization] preparedness by providing participants an opportunity to evaluate current response concepts, policies, plans, and capabilities for a response to a disaster in the workplace. This exercise will focus on command-and-control policies, coordination, critical decisions, notifications, and integration of private, local, and state assets necessary to save lives and protect public health and safety. The role of coordination and information sharing strategies will be critical to the overall response and recovery effort.

**Objectives**

At the conclusion of this tabletop exercise, participants should be able to:

* Demonstrate the ability to notify and mobilize emergency personnel and provide accurate information prior to responding.
* Evaluate the capability to direct and control incident management activities.
* Interact and collaborate with security, law enforcement, and other authorities and in a coordinated manner to conduct a thorough response to a disaster scenario.
* Analyze the situation and determine what other resources, if any, are required to successfully complete the response and investigation of a disaster scenario.
* Optionally, demonstrate the ability to plan for organizational restoration and mitigation after the event.

**Core Capabilities**

The National Planning Scenarios and establishment of the National Preparedness Priorities have steered the focus of homeland security toward a capabilities-based planning approach. Capabilities-based planning focuses on planning under uncertainty because the next danger or disaster can never be forecast with complete accuracy. Therefore, capabilities-based planning takes an all-hazards approach to planning and preparation, which builds capabilities that can be applied to a wide variety of incidents. States and urban areas use capabilities-based planning to identify a baseline assessment of their homeland security efforts by comparing their current capabilities against the Core Capabilities List. This approach identifies gaps in current capabilities and focuses efforts on identifying and developing priority capabilities and tasks for the jurisdiction. Organizations and companies are encouraged to use similar approach – especially when supporting or collaborating with states and urban areas to provide services that are critical.

The primary Core Capabilities associated with the objectives for this exercise are:

1. **Operational Coordination:**

Establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports the execution of core capabilities; and

1. **On Scene Security and Protection:**

Ensure a safe and secure environment through law enforcement and related security and protection operations for people and communities located within affected areas and for all traditional and atypical response personnel engaged in lifesaving and life-sustaining operations.

# Exercise Expectations

The event you are preparing to conduct is a tabletop exercise. This tabletop exercise is intended to involve key personnel discussing a hypothetical scenario in an informal setting. You can use the discussion time to talk about plans, policies, and procedures and promote functional organization through the understanding of authorities, protocols, and response resources that already exist within participants’ jurisdictions. This tabletop exercise is designed to facilitate discussion among various participating entities such as:

• Organization’s management

• Security and Law Enforcement agencies (local, state, and federal)

• Emergency Management

• Fire Department

• Emergency Medical Systems (EMS, hospitals, coroner)

• Emergency Dispatch (9-1-1)

Note: see document Incident Response Organizations and NIMS for websites, contract information, and supporting documentation including latest guidelines and news.

# Facilitator Expectations

The role of the facilitator is to guide the participants through the tabletop exercise. Your primary responsibilities include:

* Read and understand this guide prior to conducting the tabletop exercise.
* Be familiar with the objectives of the tabletop exercise and ensure that participants are familiar with these objectives prior to the tabletop exercise.
* Understand the exercise evaluation tool that will be used by evaluators to document highlights of the discussions.
* Thoroughly review the Situation Manual (SITMAN) and organizational PowerPoint presentation if applicable.
* Establish and monitor a basic set of ground rules for participants to follow during discussion.
* Keep the tabletop exercise on schedule.
* Participants should be encouraged to break as necessary.
* Facilitate discussions by asking pertinent questions rather than offering your opinions.
* Keep all discussions focused by bringing the group back on track if the conversation strays from the topic.
* Encourage interaction among the different groups as they would be in the “real world.”
* Encourage the participants to share their experiences and ideas so that they can learn from one another.
* Help the group if participants have questions or need clarification of the discussion questions.
* Identify participants that have relevant and recent experience with scenarios such as this and encourage them to share with less experienced participants.

The facilitator should ideally be somebody who is not a member of a group or organization participating in the exercise. The facilitator need not be a subject-matter expert but should be a careful listener who can ask questions to encourage group discussions. The facilitator should try to balance the discussions by drawing out players who are not participating, as well as limiting players who would otherwise dominate the discussions.

County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) offices, which are experienced with planning and hosting tabletop exercises, are often a good place to find facilitators

# Participant Expectations

The following can be expected of the tabletop exercise participants:

* Participants should have a working knowledge of their standard operating procedures (SOPs), MOUs, MOAs, or other interdisciplinary mechanism(s) used for events.
* Participants who have relevant experience are expected to share those experiences with less experienced participants during the exercise.

# Additional Materials

A PowerPoint presentation can be developed to help you facilitate the tabletop exercise and to enhance the learning experience for attendees. The PowerPoint can include notes on each slide to help guide you through the presentation. A situation manual (SITMAN) can be created as a reference tool for the participants. A Fact Sheet can be provided to all participants at the beginning of the exercise.

Additionally, an exercise evaluation tool can be used by the designated evaluators, a participant feedback form, table tents, and sign in sheets. The evaluation tool and the participant feedback forms should be collected by the facilitator at the conclusion of the exercise.

# Preparations: Getting Started

The facilitator should arrive early enough (at least one hour before the start of the tabletop exercise is recommended) to make sure that the room is set up properly and that the necessary documents and supplies are available. The facilitator should also check that all equipment is in working order.

The following items should be provided by the lead planner:

* List of participants and their affiliations
* Seating arrangements for participants with name tents
* One copy of the SITMAN for each participant
* Participant feedback forms to each participant
* Exercise evaluation tool to each evaluator
* Updated organization fact sheet and applicable policies and procedures for reference
* Appropriate audio-visual equipment, including a projector and microphones as necessary, and meeting supplies
* Certificate of Attendance for each participant (optional)

# Exercise at a Glance

|  | **Time *(Mins.)*** | **Pages*(SITMAN)*** | **Description** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Welcome** | 15 | N/A | * Introductions
* Administration
 |
| **Pre-Exercise Seminar** | 30 | N/A | * Current threat assessments and lessons learned from similar incidents
* Organizational information and emergency procedures overview
 |
| **Exercise Briefing** | 30 |  | * Overview of scope, purpose, and objectives as well as rolls of participants
 |
| **Module 1** | 20 |  | * Presentation of first module: Initial Notification
 |
| Module 1 facilitated discussion | 1030 |  | * Key issues are presented
* Group discusses how its work should be coordinated
 |
| **Module 2** | 20 |  | * Presentation of second module: Response
 |
| Module 2 facilitated discussion | 1030 |  | * Key issues are presented
* Group discusses how its work should be coordinated
 |
| **Module 3** | 20 |  | * Presentation of third module: Disaster Recovery
 |
| Module 3 facilitated discussion | 1030 |  | * Key issues are presented
* Group discusses how its work should be coordinated
 |
| **The Way Forward** | 15 | N/A | * Lead Planner, Facilitator, and Participants discuss questions regarding the exercise and forward planning
 |

Times listed above are a suggested guideline but may vary slightly depending on group dialogue.

Approximate Total Exercise Time: Approximately 4-5 hours

# Clock Management

As facilitator, you are responsible for keeping the tabletop exercise on schedule. Running behind schedule and finishing late will distract from the tabletop exercise’s goals and may detract from the learning experience. Also, cutting corners and rushing through the program may have equally negative effects, as the continuity of the learning can be greatly disrupted.

Some helpful guidelines for you to consider are:

* Prepare in advance to be familiar with the materials.
* Designate a timekeeper to watch the clock and periodically notify the facilitator whether the exercise is on schedule. Adjust the pace of discussions accordingly.
* “Park” lengthy discussions in a “Parking Lot” and agree to return to them later (if time permits).
* Rehearse the timing of each portion of the training.
* Use the agenda — the timing has been calculated to effectively fit the allotted timeframe.
* If the training is scheduled for more or less time than the suggested timeframe, plan out a new agenda in advance.
* Manage excessive conversation by asking participants to link their comments to the stated objectives.
* Print out the PowerPoint slides, with the notes, so you can refer to them as necessary during the exercise.
* Questions and concerns that arise that cannot be resolved should be recorded and provided to the lead exercise planner for future consideration.

# Opening Remarks

Facilitator Introduction – The facilitator should welcome everyone and introduce himself/herself to the participants.

Facility Points of Interest – Identify the locations of important places in the building like the restrooms, emergency exits, snack room or cafeteria, and other places that may be needed by the participants during the tabletop exercise.

Explain the Exercise Terminology – The following is a list of terminology that is used throughout this guide. The facilitator should go over these terms with the participants so that everyone has a clear understanding.

* Facilitator – The person who provides leadership to the participants during the presentation of the entire tabletop exercise. You should briefly describe your background and qualifications. Express your intent to make this tabletop exercise a useful and rewarding experience for all participants.
* Lead Planner – The person who has overall responsibility for the tabletop exercise, including convening the Planning Team and pre- and post-exercise needs.
* Situation Manual (SITMAN) – A handbook that is given to the participants that contains the scenario, objectives and any supplemental documentation needed.
* Evaluator(s) – Representatives chosen by the Planning Team to record the events. This person does not participate in the tabletop exercise but captures the essence of the dialog using an exercise evaluation guide as a basis for use in the After-Action Report. They are chosen based on their expertise in the area (e.g., epidemiology, etc.) that they are to observe.
* Participants – Explain that representatives from various entities have been asked to take part in this exercise. Ask participants to introduce themselves by offering their name, agency/organization/entity, and their role.
* Exercise Objectives – Review tabletop exercise objectives with all participants. Ask participants what expectations they have for this exercise. Include relevant new objectives if time permits.

The exercise emphasizes the role of the organization, local agencies/organizations, first responders, state and federal agencies in response to a disaster in the workplace event. Policies, processes, and decision making are more important than minute details.

The PowerPoint presentation includes notes for the slides and potential talking points to help the facilitator guide the group. The facilitator should review the notes before the exercise and make changes as necessary. The facilitator should print out the PowerPoint slides, with the notes, to refer to during the exercise.

# Module 1, 2 & 3

Explain that Module 1 will discuss Initial Notification and Module 2 will discuss Response and Module 3 will discuss Disaster Recovery.

* Spend about 20 minutes going through each module, using the PowerPoint presentation. Let participants know that additional details are in the SITMAN.
* Spend about 10 minutes presenting the ‘Key Issues.’
* Ask participants the discussion questions one at a time and have them answer and discuss each question.
* Identify any additional requirements, critical issues, decisions, and questions you think should be addressed at this time.

# The Way Forward

Please lead the group through a discussion of the way forward for about 15 minutes. All the questions are listed in the SITMAN and here for your reference.

1. What is the most important thing you learned today in terms of managing a disaster in the workplace incident?
2. What information do you need to make informed decisions during such an event? If you don’t have that information, how do you get it or what needs to be done to make a decision without it?
3. How will your organization evaluate your protocols, policies, and procedures based on your participation in this exercise?
4. What top three actions should be taken to ensure proper incident management based on what you have learned from this exercise?

Discuss “next steps,” including items for an optional After-Action Meeting, assignments, and potential timeline. This should be partially led by the lead planner and exercise host.

# Participant Feedback Forms

To make future exercises even more successful, feedback forms are used to gather input from participants. These forms will provide details about the overall exercise process, whether the objectives were met and areas that could be improved. The comments should be captured in notes to assist in the completion of the optional After-Action Report and Improvement Plan.

After the tabletop exercise and wrap up discussion, the facilitator should have the participants complete a feedback form. These forms should be returned to the facilitator upon completion. The facilitator should then forward these feedback forms to the lead planner.

# Close Out Exercise

Thank participants for their contributions to the exercise. Ask the lead planner and exercise host to make any final remarks.