A Tabletop Exercise Workbook

12 Simple Steps to Create a Tabletop Exercise

Created by the Metro Health & Medical Preparedness Coalition with funding from the Hospital Preparedness Program Grant

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# Purpose of this workbook

This Tabletop Exercise Workbook was created with the non-emergency manager in mind. Using simple steps, fillable pages, and templates, this workbook guides you through how to design and conduct an emergency preparedness tabletop exercise step-by-step. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid require annual or twice annual preparedness exercises depending on the facility type. A tabletop exercise will fulfill your “exercise of choice” requirement (*Updated Guidance for Emergency Preparedness-Appendix Z of the State Operations Manual* [*QSO-21-15-ALL*](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-21-15-all.pdf)).

# What is an emergency preparedness exercise?

An emergency preparedness exercise is an opportunity to practice your plans. It’s a scrimmage before the big game, or the dress rehearsal before opening night. In other words, it is your chance to run, and evaluate, your preparedness plans before an actual emergency. We can draft the best written plans, but until we test those plans, we don’t know if they will work the way we expect them to.

# What is a Tabletop Exercise?

A Tabletop Exercise is essentially a group discussion, with defined objectives, led by a facilitator, and driven by an emergency scenario and targeted discussion questions.

It is an effective way to test part of plan or policy, or when exercising a plan for the first time. It can also be a building block for developing a future full-scale exercise. It is a low stress, but effective way to test your preparedness plans.

# How to use this workbook

This workbook guides you through how to design and conduct a tabletop exercise step-by-step:

* This is a self-guided workbook. Each step in the exercise preparation process contains a number of questions to consider as you conduct exercise planning. Consider these carefully as you plan and prepare for your exercise.
* Pay attention to the sections titled  Reflective Pause. These Pauses are opportunities for you to practice what you’ve learned and start preparing your Tabletop Exercise.
* Note the sections titled *Design Tip*. These sections provide tips and suggestions recognized as best practice in exercise planning.
* The appendices of this workbook contain templates for you to use to write, evaluate and report on your Tabletop Exercise.

# Step 1: Exercise Logistics

Before you begin designing your tabletop exercise there are a few things you need to decide.

## Length of exercise

The length of your exercise will be determined by several factors: How much time can you devote to an exercise? How complex is your scenario? Are you exercising a piece of a plan or an entire plan? How many people will be involved?

A simple scenario with a small group exercising a missing resident policy may take 60 minutes, whereas a multi-part scenario with a large group of participants exercising an entire evacuation plan could take two to three hours (or more!).

Consider the above factors when determining the amount of time to dedicate to your exercise.

 Reflective Pause: How much time will you dedicate to the exercise? Note the exercise date, time of day, and length.

## Who will you invite?

Who do you want to participate in your exercise? CMS surveyors expect to see both staff and leadership participate in preparedness exercises. The scenario you want to exercise will also help to determine who should participate in the exercise. If you already have a scenario in mind, think about which staff may need to respond given the scenario. Would your clinical staff need to respond? Front desk staff? Environmental or Food Services? If yes, consider inviting them to the exercise.

Be sure to send out meeting invites to your attendees as soon as possible to reserve time on their calendars.

Reflective Pause: Brainstorm about who you will invite to your exercise.

* Leadership:
* Administrative Staff:
* Clinical Staff:
* Environmental Services:
* Facilities:
* Front Line/Desk Staff:
* Others:

Setting & Format

Where will you be conducting your exercise? Is the exercise in-person or virtual? If in-person, do you have enough space to accommodate the group? If necessary, have you reserved the meeting space? If you are conducting the exercise on a virtual platform, determine what features you may want to use during the exercise—chat function, Q&A, breakout rooms, etc.

How will you be presenting the exercise to your participants? Do you need to create a slide deck or handouts? Think about how your participants will receive the information during the exercise.

Reflective Pause: Note where you will be holding the exercise and any important details about setting or format.

## Assign a timekeeper and note-taker

Facilitating an exercise can be a big job. Sometimes it helps to have someone else responsible for keeping time and taking notes. The **timekeeper** helps to keep the group on track, being mindful of getting through as many discussion questions as possible within the time allotted. The **note-taker** writes down any significant moments during the exercise. Aha moments, outstanding questions, best practices, and gaps are all things a notetaker may record. If need be, one person could fill both the notetaker and the timekeeper roles.

Reflective Pause: Who will fill the following roles?

Timekeeper:

Note-taker:

Finally, don’t wing it!

Give yourself plenty of time to organize and design your exercise. A little preparation on the front end will make for a successful exercise day.

# Step 2: Choose What to Exercise

When deciding what to exercise, there are a few factors to consider:

* 1. Hazard Vulnerability Analysis (HVA). What are the highest-rated risks in your HVA? Have you exercised the plans that would be needed to respond to your highest risks? If not, this is a good place to start.
	2. Past exercises. Notes from previous exercises and exercise reports are an excellent place to find exercise topics. Did past exercises reveal gaps in existing plans? If yes, and you have done work to update plans or policies to meet those gaps, design an exercise that will re-test those gaps to see if there is any improvement.
	3. Real world events. Don't discount "real world" opportunities or near misses. Have you ever been on the verge of activating a response plan but at the last minute the threat disappeared? Maybe afterwards you thought, “Whew! I’m glad that didn’t materialize.” But, what if it did? Would we have been prepared? If the answer is no, that’s a good place to start for an exercise.
	4. Think of your target audience. Who are you inviting to your exercise? Write an exercise that would test their roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency and during a response.
	5. What keeps you up at night? Is there a part of your plan that gives you heartburn or an event that you dread? This is usually a good indicator of an area where your team may need some practice.

Consider testing just a piece of a process or a single policy, not the entire plan. In fact, when exercising a new plan or policy, it is recommended to start small and then build.

Design Tip: Don’t overcomplicate it.

Reflective Pause: Decide what to exercise. Once you have decided, begin by doing a general brainstorm. Use the space below, or a blank piece of paper or electronic document and begin by asking yourself, “What would be my top 3-5 concerns if this scenario were to happen?” Jot these down. Not only will this process get your wheel’s turning, but you can also use your notes to help you develop your scenario, discussion questions, and talking points later on.

# Step 3: Write Exercise Objectives

Every exercise should have written objectives. An exercise objective has two purposes:

1. An objective states what you expect to see happen during the exercise.
	1. *e.g.* *Participants will activate the facility response plan.*
2. The objectives also help you evaluate exercise performance.
	1. *Did participants activate the facility response plan during the exercise? Did they do it at the correct time? Did they execute all steps or miss some?*

Using objectives during evaluation helps you to identify best practices and learning opportunities.

*Participants will…*

Activate | Demonstrate | Notify | Assess | Initiate | Describe | Identify | Test | Validate | Evaluate | Practice | Review | Show

Design Tip: Use action words when writing exercise objectives.

We recommend drafting **1-5 exercise objectives** depending on the size of the exercise. A short 30-minute drill may have one exercise objective. A larger, more complex exercise may have many. Be careful not to add so many objectives that it dilutes the effectiveness of the exercise. You can find examples of exercise objectives in Appendix A.

**SMART** Objectives:

* Simple: Phrase language simply and clearly.
* Measurable: Set the level of performance so results are observable.
* Achievable: Make sure the objective can be achieved using the resources your organization can commit.
* Realistic: Present a realistic expectation of the exercise.
* Task-oriented: Focus on a behavior or procedure, ideally an individual issue.

Design Tip: Use SMART Objectives

Reflective Pause: Write 1-5 exercise objectives.

# Step 4: Write Your Scenario

Now that you know what you want to exercise, it is time to write your exercise scenario. The scenario’s purpose is to provide context for the exercise and to give participants an event to react to.

It is recommended that you keep your scenario realistic and plausible. Adding too many artificialities or too many details can distract participants. For instance, participants may have trouble engaging in the exercise if you write a scenario featuring a tsunami but your facility is nowhere near a body of water. If you do have to include some artificialities in your exercise scenario, be sure to call those out for participants on exercise day. For instance, if in real time you are doing the exercise during the day but the exercise scenario is set in the evening, be sure to point that out to participants.

Have you heard about an event in the news that you think would make a good exercise? Use that. Or you can use a search engine and keywords to search for news articles about real-world responses. Use the information you find to help your write your scenario.

Design Tip: Consider real world events when drafting your scenario.

We have provided you with a fillable Tabletop Exercise Manual Template to start drafting your exercise. The template can be found in Appendix #. This manual will be used by the facilitator to guide participants through the exercise. It contains basic exercise information, the scenario, and the discussion questions.

For examples of written scenarios, see Appendix B.

Reflective Pause: Use Tabletop Exercise Template in Appendix C to start drafting your exercise scenario.

# Step 5: Discussion Questions

Now that you have the beginning of a scenario written, it is time to draft discussion questions. In a tabletop exercise, discussion is key. Discussion questions help you to facilitate the exercise as well as to test participant knowledge and understanding of your plans. Well designed questions can promote discussion that lead to better understanding of how staff react and respond together during an actual event.

When writing discussion questions refer back to the notes you took during your initial brainstorming session. Likely you noted key points of action you would expect to see happen in response to the scenario you’ve chosen. Write questions that would prompt participants towards these key points of action. Also reference your exercise objectives. Remember, your objectives are what you expect to see happen while responding to this scenario. Write discussion questions that will help evaluate your written objectives.

When writing a Tabletop Exercise, the power is in the question. Well written questions will move the exercise action forward, test participant understanding of your plans, and identify gaps in participant training or knowledge.

For examples of discussion questions, see Appendix B.

Reflective Pause: Use Tabletop Exercise Template in Appendix C to start drafting your discussion questions.

## Continue to build your exercise

You continue to build your exercise like this: scenario, discussion questions, scenario update, discussion questions, etc.

The number of scenario updates and sets of discussion questions you choose is up to you and will be determined by several factors:

* How complex do you want the exercise to be?
* How much time do you have?
* Are you exercising a policy or a whole plan?
* Who is your audience?

Reflective Pause: Use Tabletop Exercise Template in Appendix C to continue drafting your discussion questions and scenario updates.

# Conducting your exercise

Just like a little prep work goes a long way before designing your exercise, a dose of preparation prior to conducting your exercise will pay off in the end. The following are steps to take prior to conducting your exercise to help set you up for a successful exercise day.

# Step 6: Exercise preparation

Consider the following items prior to conducting your exercise.

* Map out pre-exercise timeline. Plan enough time prior to the exercise to do the following:
	+ Send calendar invites to participants as early as possible in the process. Make sure participants have enough lead time to reserve the space on their schedules.
	+ Do staff need any training prior to participating in the exercise? Allow time for this.
	+ Plan enough time for preparing exercise materials and gathering supplies
* Map out exercise schedule: build in time prior to the exercise for participant sign-in, a pre-exercise briefing, and a 15-20 minute debrief after the exercise.
* Reserve meeting room or virtual platform.
* Draft and send pre-exercise communication. What do participants need to know prior to the exercise?
* Prepare Participant Guide and Exercise Evaluation Guide.
	+ - A Participant Guide is a one-page document outlining basic exercise information and expectations for participants. See an example of a participant guide in Appendix D.
		- An Exercise Evaluation Guide is a tool used to collect observations during the exercise. It is used by the Evaluator to measure exercise performance against the exercise objectives. You will learn more about the Evaluator role in Step 7. See Appendix E for an example of an Exercise Evaluation Guide.
* Prepare any needed supplies or materials. Copies of plans or policies, pens, papers, contact lists, etc.
* Consider any safety concerns. Safety should always be our top priority when exercising. Tabletop exercises are unlikely to have a lot, if any, safety concerns. However, it is always best practice to review your exercise for any potential safety issues.

# Step 7: Assign exercise roles

When conducting an exercise, we need people to facilitate, evaluate, and document the exercise. We recommend assigning one person per role. However, if you are short on people, you can combine role assignments.

* Facilitator: The facilitator leads participants through the exercise using the Tabletop Exercise Manual (Appendix C). The Facilitator:
	+ - Keeps an eye on time
		- Redirects participants if the discussion gets off-track.
		- Provides prompts if participants get stuck.
* Evaluator: The evaluator is responsible for observing exercise activity and collecting observations and data using the Exercise Evaluation Guide (Appendix E). The Evaluator:
	+ - Understands the exercise concept, objectives, and scenario.
		- Fills out the exercise evaluation guide (Appendix E) which will be used to write the exercise report.
		- Attends the post-exercise debrief to share feedback and/or ask for clarification on what they observed.
		- Hands off their notes and completed evaluation guide to the facilitator.
* Notetaker: The notetaker observes the exercise and takes notes of any notable events, decisions, and observations during exercise play. They hand off all notes to the facilitator at the end of the exercise. These notes will be used to write the exercise report.
* Participants: The participants actively participate in the exercise. Participants:
	+ - Respond to the scenario and discussion questions given their current knowledge of plans and policies.
		- Respond to the scenario as if it were a real-life event, working through any artificialities in the scenario.
		- Take note of any aha moments, concerns, or outstanding questions to share during debrief.
		- Take part in the post-exercise debrief to share their insights.

Reflective Pause: Assign the following roles.

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Notetaker: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Step 8: Day-of preparation

Exercise day is finally here! Here is a checklist to help you prepare:

* Print participant guide. A participant guide is a one-page document outlining basic exercise information and expectations for participants. See an example of a participant guide in Appendix D.
* Supplies. What do you need to conduct the exercise? Pens, paper, computer, screen, projector, copies of relevant plans, etc.
* Sign-in sheet. Surveyors want to see a list of participating staff. A sign-in sheet is an easy way for you to track which staff participated in the exercise.
* Confirm exercise roles and review responsibilities with the facilitator, evaluator, and notetaker.
* Room set-up. Are you in-person or virtual? How should the room or virtual platform be arranged?
* Pre-test communication tools and technology, if using.

# Step 9: Pre-exercise briefing

It is time to conduct your exercise. You have participants gathered, exercise materials prepared, and now it is time to start. Before you dive into the scenario and discussion questions, we recommend conducting a pre-exercise briefing. The briefing sets the tone and expectations for the exercise. At the briefing, the facilitator should do the following:

1. Set the tone. Exercises are practice for the real deal. Encourage participants to approach this time as a learning opportunity. It is okay to make mistakes and ask questions. Encourage a culture of safety and ask participants to speak up if they observe any safety concerns.
2. Ask participants to work through artificialities or assumptions. If you have written any artificialities or assumptions into your scenario, acknowledge them and call those out for participants.
3. Review Participant Guide. If using a Participant Guide, review the information with participants to help orient them to the exercise.
4. Review roles and responsibilities with evaluator and notetaker.

You can find an example of a Participant Guide in Appendix D.

# Step 10: Facilitate the exercise

Once you have completed the pre-exercise briefing, the facilitator will start the exercise by introducing the first scenario and set of discussion questions to participants. Ask participants to work through the questions one-by-one, getting through as many as possible in the time allotted.

Remember, as a facilitator, your role is to:

* Keep an eye on time and redirect the group if the discussion gets derailed.
* If participants get stuck, provide a prompt to redirect them.
* Encourage problem-solving and remind participants that this is a learning environment.

Finally, remember that you are facilitating the exercise, but you are not a participant. Do your best to balance intervention with giving participants space to work through the scenario.

# Step 11: Exercise Debrief

After the participants have worked through the scenario and discussion questions you will end the exercise and then conduct a short debrief. This is a facilitated debrief with the exercise participants, evaluator, and notetaker immediately after the exercise to discuss the results. Be sure to take notes because this information will be used to write your exercise report. Plan for 15-20 minutes for this debrief and ask the following questions:

1. What are areas of improvement identified during the exercise?
	1. Where did we have gaps or unanswered questions? Did we identify missing plans, needed training or lack of equipment?
	2. Take note of these for integration back into your plan and into the exercise report.
2. What went well during the exercise?
	1. Identify strengths, successes and best practices. Acknowledge and celebrate these as team.
	2. Take note of these for integration into exercise report.

Reflective Pause: Use the Exercise Debrief Guide in Appendix F to conduct a post-exercise debrief. This should take 15-20 minutes.

# Step 12: Post-exercise tasks

To complete the exercise cycle, there are a few final tasks to complete:

* Collect notes from evaluators and notetakers.
* Collect participant sign-in sheet to include with report.
* Decide who completes the exercise report.
* Consider how the completed report will be approved and communicated to leadership and staff.
* Complete the exercise report.
* Integrate findings from report into emergency preparedness program.

## Writing the exercise report

Appendix G has a template for an exercise report. Writing the exercise report is important for a number or reasons:

1. The report identifies ways to improve your preparedness program.
2. It tracks what went right during the exercise and what we want to keep doing.
3. It creates a timetable and accountability for completing improvement items; AND
4. You can use it to show surveyors you have met your CMS Appendix Z exercise requirement(s).

The exercise report is written using data and observations from the notetakers, evaluator and completed evaluation guide, and notes taken during the post-exercise debrief.

*The exercise report should include the following:*

* Title of exercise
* Date of Exercise
* Summary of exercise: describe what happened
* Brief description of scenario used
* Who attended (signature sheet)
* Strengths/Best practices (list 1-5 strengths)
* Areas for improvement (list 1-5 improvements)
* Specific steps you will take to address improvement items and who these steps are assigned to.
* Signature of author and date

You will notice the template provided includes an improvement plan table. This table is where you will record improvement items, who they are assigned to, and by what date they will be completed. Make sure the person responsible for the improvement item understands what is expected of them and when. Finally, remember to keep your improvement items reasonable and achievable.

Leadership or surveyors may hold you accountable for the improvement items identified in your exercise report. Therefore, be sure to make your improvement items realistic and achievable. This may mean breaking down big improvement items into smaller steps.

For example, say your facility does not have an overhead paging system and you identified in your report that one is needed for emergency communications. Your facility may not have the means or budget to purchase the equipment or labor it would take to have one installed. Instead, maybe your improvement item is to explore options for overhead paging systems as well as alternative emergency mass communication options. This gives you the flexibility to make progress towards this improvement item (achievable) while keeping in mind the financial and business needs of your facility (realistic).

 **Design Tip: Be mindful of what you include in the exercise report.**

# Conclusion

Congratulations! You have successfully completed an entire exercise cycle. From planning and design to conducting and evaluation, you have tested your plans and come away with successes and ideas to improve your preparedness program.

Don’t forget to store all your exercise materials, including the exercise report and sign-in sheet in a place that can be easily accessed for future exercise planning or an upcoming survey visit.

Feel free to revisit this workbook for support in planning your next Tabletop Exercise.

For questions related to this workbook:

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# Appendix A: Exercise Objective Starters

Every exercise should have written objectives. An exercise objective has two purposes:

1. An objective states what you expect to see happen during the exercise.
	1. *e.g.* *Participants will activate the facility response plan.*
2. The objectives also help you evaluate exercise performance.
	1. *Did participants activate the facility response plan during the exercise? Did they do it at the correct time? Did they execute all steps or miss some?*

Using objectives during evaluation helps you to identify best practices and learning opportunities. We recommend drafting **1-5 exercise objectives** depending on the size of the exercise.

Below is a list of generic exercise objective examples and starters for you to customize.

|  |
| --- |
| **Generic Exercise Objectives**  |
| **Participants will…** |
| Activate the facility response plan. |
| Assess resource and supply needs. |
| Activate and follow the emergency notification process. |
| Notify the appropriate response partners. |
| Identify or test current internal and external communications plan |
| Assess resident status and needs. |
| Coordinate response operations by activating a response team. |
| Provide for resident/client and staff safety throughout the duration of the event. |
| Evacuate all residents by \_\_\_\_ hours. |
| Ensure proper PPE is worn and appropriate safety procedures are followed at all times. |
| Assess and document damages of the impacted areas |
| Coordinate response operations between assisting agencies |
| Assure basic needs and services for residents or clients. |
| Keep stakeholders, responders and public informed of response activities |
| Ensure an effective communications system is established |
| Foster communications between \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ |
| Provide accurate and timely information to the staff, residents, clients, families, stakeholders, and cooperating agencies |
| Track on and off duty staff |
| Establish protocols for surveillance and contact-tracing. |
| Examine and evaluate facility incident response plans |
| Evaluate internal and external communication plan to include local and regional levels. |
| The decision to shelter-in-place versus evacuation happens quickly and follows the pre-determined criteria and guidelines  |
| Incident Command system is in place and is enabled for decision-making  |

# Appendix B: Exercise Scenario Starters

The following are examples of exercise scenario starters.

**Exercise Starter: Power Outage Exercise**

You are the Supervisor or Charge Nurse of your Department in your facility. You have been informed by the facilities department of a planned power outage. This will take place 48 hours from now. Your facility will be without power for 6-9 hours.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Do you have written plans for power outage?
2. Who/which departments need to be part of the discussion defining what your plans will be?
3. How will you assist the nursing department in providing power for the patients who need power for medical devices? (Maintenance)
4. Do patients have any medications that need refrigeration or freezing? (Nursing)
5. If you are unable to provide all of the services you normally do, how would you prioritize?
6. What services could you postpone for 6-9 hours?
7. Are there any extra supplies that you will need?
8. Any concerns about food for patients/staff?
9. “How are you communicating with staff (working and off duty) and family members?
10. What are your greatest concerns?

*Note: This could expand into a longer tabletop exercise, if desired.*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise Starter: Severe Weather/Tornado**

You are the Supervisor or Charge Nurse of your Department in your facility.

Throughout the day, several strong thunderstorms have ripped through your County causing flooding in low-lying areas and minor power outages due to high winds. Heavy rain, severe lighting and small-to-golf ball-sized hail were reported.

Around 4:00 p.m. the National Weather Service issued a Tornado Watch. At 6:00 p.m. weather spotters reported a funnel cloud had touched down ½ mile south of your facility.

By 6:30 p.m. the tornado left 15 miles of destruction including widespread power outages, flooding and significant structural damage to homes and a few businesses. Downed power lines and debris have led the County Sheriff to close roads throughout the County. Your facility is spared but is without power.

Most of the 7:00 PM staff cannot arrive to work because of all of the debris and downed power lines. (Power may not be restored for several days and it is unknown how long roads may take to clear.).

**Discussion Questions**

1. What actions do you take at 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM ? How do you notify all departments in the facility?
2. Where do you shelter everyone in the facility?
3. Do you have an emergency generator? How long can it run? How much fuel do you store for it?
4. Who else do you attempt to notify?
5. How do you feed everyone at your facility?
6. How many days worth of medication do residents or staff or visitors have?
7. How will you staff the facility with closed roads?
8. What are your greatest concerns?

*Note: This could expand into a longer tabletop exercise, if desired.*

**Exercise Starter: Influenza/Pandemic**

Flu season is here. It is a particularly bad influenza that has been the cause of many elderly deaths and many of your residents are ill. Staff is calling in sick both because they are ill or have family members who are ill and they need to take care of them. The flu vaccine has been found to be only minimally effective. There are national discussions about whether this flu season constitutes a pandemic situation.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Who has been notified?
2. How will you staff the facility if many of the staff aren’t able to report for their shifts?
3. When do you close the facility to outside visitors? Who makes that decision?
4. How do you tell visitors of the closed facility status? Newspaper? Radio? Social media? Website? Whose responsibility is this?
5. How do you handle family members who insist on visiting?
6. What about meals? How will they be prepared and served if kitchen staff is unavailable?
7. What additional supplies and PPE will you need to care for the ill residents? How will you get additional supplies of those items?
8. Can you obtain needed meds or additional oxygen easily?
9. What are your greatest concerns?

*Note: This could expand into a longer tabletop exercise, if desired.*

# Appendix C: Tabletop Exercise Manual

The following three pages contain a fillable template in which to draft your exercise.

[Exercise Title]

[Facility/Organization Name]
[Date]

**Exercise Overview**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Exercise Name** | [Title] |
| **Exercise Date/Time** | [Date/Time] |
| **Scope** | This exercise is a [Tabletop, drill, functional, full-scale, workshop, community-based].It is planned for [amount of time] at [location of exercise]. Exercise participants include: [list roles or organizations who are participating] |
| **Focus Area(s)** | [List plan, policy, or hazard you are testing] |
| **Objectives** | [list 1-5 objectives] |
| **Scenario** | [include a brief summary of your scenario] |
| **Participating Jurisdictions/ Organizations** | [list your facility name as well as any other partners who are exercising with you] |
| **Point of Contact** | [name and contact info of who is responsible for the exercise] |

Initial Scenario

[Write your scenario here].

Questions

*Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in this scenario update. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.*

1. [Write discussion questions here]

Scenario Update

[Write scenario updates here]

Questions

*Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in this scenario update. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.*

1. [Write discussion questions here]

Continue alternating scenario updates and discussion questions until you reach the desired length of your exercise.

END EXERCISE

# Appendix D: Participant Guide Example

The following three pages contain an example of a Participant Guide. A Participant Guide is a brief document outlining basic exercise information and expectations for participants. This guide should be given to participants at the beginning of the exercise and reviewed with them during the pre-exercise briefing.

**Participant Guide
ABC Facility**

**Exercise:** Shelter-in-Place Tabletop Exercise
**Date:** June 18, 2024
**Time:** 9:00-10:30am: Exercise
 10:30-10:50: Exercise Debrief
**Locations:** ABC Facility Conference Room

**Exercise Structure**

This will be a facilitated tabletop exercise. Our facility will simulate a shelter-in-place event due to a chemical spill. We will practice activating our shelter-in-place plan.

As part of this exercise, we will also practice our processes for emergency communications and emergency food and water supply.

**Exercise Scenario**

It is 7:00am on a Tuesday in June. A staff member on their way to work calls to let the front desk know that they will be late as they are stuck in traffic on a local highway. Traffic is backed up for a couple of miles in each direction and there have been a number of emergency vehicles with lights and sirens that have driven by. The staff member is rerouted and makes it into work shortly after. Not long after, another staff member receives an emergency alert on their phone that the traffic back-up was caused by an overturned tanker truck. The alert says that the tanker is on fire and leaking liquid chlorine. The alert states that anyone within 3 miles of the crash site should shelter-in-place until further notice while the scene is assessed. ABC facility is within the 3-mile zone.

**Exercise Objectives**

During this exercise participants will:

1. Activate their shelter-in-place plans.
2. Demonstrate processes for internal and external communications during an emergency.
3. Assess emergency food and water supply for an extended event.
4. Describe resources for receiving situational awareness about the event.

**Plans and Work Aids for this Exercise**

* Facility ABC Communications Plan
* Facility ABC Shelter-in-Place Plan

**Participant Roles & Guidelines**

**Facilitator:** The facilitator leads participants through the exercise. The Facilitator:

* Keeps an eye on time
* Redirects participants if the discussion gets off-track.
* Provides prompts if participants get stuck.

**Facilitator: Jane Smith**

**Evaluator:** The evaluator is responsible for observing exercise activity and collecting observations and data. The Evaluator:

* Fills out the exercise evaluation guide
* Attends the post-exercise debrief to share feedback and/or ask for clarification on what they observed.
* Hands off their notes and completed evaluation guide to the facilitator.

**Evaluator: Duane Simons**

**Participants**: The participants actively participate in the exercise. Participants:

* Respond to the scenario and discussion questions given their current knowledge of plans and policies.
* Respond to the scenario as if it were a real-life event, working through any artificialities in the scenario.
* Take note of any aha moments, concerns, or outstanding questions to share during debrief.
* Take part in the post-exercise debrief to share their insights.

 **Assumptions and Artificialities**

In any exercise a number of assumptions and artificialities may be necessary to complete the exercise in the time allotted. During this exercise, the following apply:

* There will be no movement of people or supplies during this exercise. All movement of supplies or people will be simulated.
* This is a non-judgmental learning environment where players are encouraged to discuss and investigate all potential solutions to exercise events.
* Parts of the scenario may seem implausible. Recognize that the exercise has objectives to satisfy and may require incorporation of unrealistic aspects. Every effort has been made by the exercise’s planning team to balance realism with creating an effective learning and evaluation environment.

# Appendix E: Exercise Evaluation Guide Example

The following two pages contain an example of an Exercise Evaluation Guide. The left column is where you will list “Expected Actions.” These are things you would expect to see from participants given the exercise objectives, scenario, and discussion questions. Use these as your guide when writing the Expected Actions.

The right column is where the Evaluator can write down comments and observations based on whether they observed participants performing the Expected Actions. Outstanding questions, best practices, and areas for improvement may also be noted by the Evaluator in this column.

**ABC Facility Shelter-in-Place Exercise**

 **Exercise Evaluation Guide (EEG)**

**Date**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Expected Actions** | **Evaluator Comments**  |
| **Shelter-in-place plan activation:*** Did participants activate the facility shelter-in-place plan?
* Did participants notify the appropriate leadership of the need for plan activation?
* Were participants able to identify who has the authority to activate a response plan?
* Did participants discuss the need for a staffed response team?
 |  |
| **Internal/External Communications*** Did participants identify means for communicating plans to internal staff? How about staff scheduled to come in for a shift later?
* Did staff identify any external partners who needed to be aware of the shelter-in-place? (response partners, vendors, law enforcement, etc?)
* How will staff keep families updated on the facility status and status of their loved ones?
* Did staff identify ways to communicate to visitors and vendors that the facility is currently inaccessible?
 |  |
| **Emergency Food and Water Supply*** Did staff discuss plans for accessing food, water, medication, and other essential supplies if the shelter-in-place event is prolonged?
* Did staff perform an assessment of current supply levels?
* Did staff discuss alternative means for emergency supplies if vendors were unable to access the building due to the shelter-in-place order?
 |  |
| **Situational Awareness*** What resources did staff identify for receiving up-to-date information about the shelter-in-place order?
 |  |
| **Overall Observations/Comments:** |  |

**Evaluator Name:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluator Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix F: Exercise Debrief Guide

**Exercise Name:
Exercise Date:
Facility/Organization:**

***Instructions:*** *The post-exercise debrief takes place immediately following the exercise. It should last 15-20 minutes. The debrief is led by the Facilitator and includes participants, evaluators, and notetakers. This is an opportunity to debrief on lessons learned during the exercise. Players may share feedback on exercise performance and the Evaluator may ask for clarifications about what they observed. The Facilitator poses the questions below to the group and takes notes on the responses. Information collected during the debrief should be incorporated into the Exercise Report and used to update and improve your preparedness plans.*

1. **Based on the exercise today, list the top 3 issues and/or areas that need improvement.**
2. **Based on the exercise today, list 3 strengths or best practices that were identified.**
3. **Given the above strengths and areas of improvement, list any equipment, training, or plans/procedures that should be reviewed, revised, or developed.**

# Appendix G: Exercise Report Template

Below is a fillable Exercise Report Template to record findings from your exercise.

Writing the exercise report is important for a number or reasons:

1. The report identifies ways to improve your preparedness program.
2. It tracks what went right during the exercise and what we want to keep doing.
3. It creates a timetable and accountability for completing improvement items; AND
4. You can use it to show surveyors you have met your CMS Appendix Z exercise requirement(s).

The exercise report is written using data and observations from the notetakers, evaluator and completed evaluation guide, and notes taken during the post-exercise debrief.

**Exercise Report**

|  |
| --- |
| **Exercise Information**  |
| **Exercise:**  | **Location:**  | **Exercise Date/Time:**  |
| **Agency Contact:**  | **Date of this report:**  |
| **Scenario Summary** |
| *Briefly describe the exercise* |
| **Exercise Analysis**  |
| **What went well:** * *List 1-3 successes and best practices identified during the exercise*
 |
| **Learning Opportunities:** * *List 1-3 learning opportunities or improvement items identified during the exercise*
 |

**Improvement Plan (List any action items such as updating plans/policies, re-training, buying supplies, etc)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Observation**  | **Recommendation** | **Assigned To** | **Date Completed** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |  |  |

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_