

Systems Down!

A Network Outage Exercise

Exercise Manual

September 16, 2025

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	Systems Down! A Network Outage Exercise
Exercise Dates	September 16, 2025
Scope	This exercise is a community-based, functional exercise planned for 2 hours and 30 minutes at the participant's organization and through an online virtual platform. Exercise play is limited to participants including Minnesota home care agencies, hospice organizations, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, intermediate care facilities, clinics, and the Metro Health & Medical Preparedness Coalition.
Focus Area(s)	Downtime procedures, continuity of operations, and recovery
Objectives	<p>1) Participants will test their continuity of operations plans in response to a network outage.</p> <p>2) Participants will activate their downtime procedures for charting, client management, and other business processes.</p> <p>3) Participants will discuss return-to-normal procedures once the servers are restored.</p>
Threat or Hazard	Network outage with downed servers.
Scenario	You are experiencing a network outage. Servers are down with no timeframe for return. How will this impact your organization's operations?
Sponsor	Metro Health & Medical Preparedness Coalition
Participating Jurisdictions/ Organizations	A list of participating organizations is available by request.
Point of Contact	<p>Sponsor:</p> <p>Metro Health & Medical Preparedness Coalition prepared@metrohealthready.org</p> <p>Exercise Director:</p> <p>Emily Moilanen, MPH Metro Health & Medical Preparedness Coalition Emily.moilanen@hcmcd.org 763-286-5839</p>

MODULE 1: SYSTEMS DOWN!

It is a Monday morning at 7:00am. Several staff members are arriving for their shift and logging on to their computers to start the day. However, staff are finding that they cannot access their company email and are getting a message saying, “Unable to connect to the network.”

Attempts at logging in to the agency’s electronic medical records system and other systems connected to the agency’s servers are unsuccessful. It appears you are dealing with a system-wide network outage.

Questions--Part A

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) Who needs to know about the outage? Who are your first notifications?
- 2) You do not yet know how long the servers will be down—what are your immediate concerns knowing your email, electronic medical records, and any other systems connected to the network are inaccessible?

Scenario Update

A call is made to the team that manages your agency’s servers. You find out that one of their data centers experienced a small fire, setting off the fire suppression system. They anticipate that it will take up to 48 hours to repair the equipment and restore your network access.

Questions--Part B

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) Will you be activating an incident response team to manage this incident?
 - a. If yes, describe which roles you would activate and who would staff them.
 - b. If no, how would you manage this incident?
 - i. What would be the trigger point to activate your response team?
- 2) You need to alert staff and others about the systems outage. Which of your communication tools/pathways will be impacted by the system outage?
 - a. Do your landline phones at the home office operate on Voice Over IP (VOIP)?
 - b. How do you access staff contact information without access to servers?
 - c. What are your back-up communication systems?

- 3) What impact might this outage have on client or resident care? Consider:
 - a. Access to medical records
 - b. Scheduling and access to schedules
 - c. Ordering of medications, equipment, or medical supplies
 - d. Anything else?
- 4) How will you communicate with clients/patients/residents and/or their family members regarding impact to care or services due to the network outage?
- 5) Do you anticipate needing assistance or support from external response partners?
 - a. Who are those response partners and how do you contact them?

MODULE 2: DOWNTIME PROCEDURES

It is approaching 11:00am on Monday and there is no new information to share. Servers remain down.

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) How will staff chart without access to electronic medical records?
 - a. Will staff need training on paper charting?
 - b. Do you have other means for capturing provider notes (medical, dietary, physical therapy, other cares, etc)?
- 2) What impact will the outage have on telehealth visits?
- 3) Will your process for receiving new client/resident referrals be affected?
 - a. Do you have an alternative way to receive and manage new referrals?
 - b. How are you communicating alternative measures to referral sources?
- 4) What other processes may be impacted by this outage? Explore downtime procedures for:
 - a. Authorization for physician's orders
 - b. Verifying insurance
 - c. Telehealth
 - d. Communicating with other providers for client care coordination
 - e. Discuss other processes that might be affected by this outage

MODULE 3: CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

It is Tuesday morning at 8:00am. There is no new information to share. Servers remain down.

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) Does this outage affect your time-keeping software?
 - a. If yes, how will your staff clock in and out and/or track their time?
- 2) How will medical billing be impacted?
- 3) Information security: When business equipment goes down, people may start using personal equipment--Do you have policies around people using their own equipment to access agency information or systems?
 - a. Where is your business/clinical information stored?
- 4) Do you have a work-from-home process for administrative staff?
 - a. Are there barriers to staff working from home?
- 5) Will there be impacts to your communication with vendors or supply replenishment and ordering?
- 6) Will Payroll be impacted if this becomes an extended event?
 - a. If yes, what are your downtime procedures for Payroll?
- 7) Discuss any communication updates to family members, outside providers, and the general public (who will write, review, and communicate these messages)?

MODULE 4: RETURN TO NORMAL

Scenario Update: It is now Tuesday at 6:00pm. You receive notice that all networks will be restored by 6:00am on Wednesday morning.

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) What are the initial steps you need to focus on to return to normal work processes?
 - a. Are additional resources needed?
- 2) How will you manage updating your electronic medical records to align with charting done using downtime procedures?
 - a. Will you need extra staff time to update records?
- 3) How will you prioritize time-sensitive information? Consider:
 - a. Following-up on new referrals
 - b. Any delayed ordering of supplies, medications
 - c. Rescheduling any missed client appointments
- 4) How are you communicating that systems are back up and running?
 - a. To staff
 - b. To Clients
 - c. To other providers
 - d. To external partners
 - e. Who else are you communicating with?
- 5) If you activated a response team to manage the event, when do you decide to demobilize?

END EXERCISE