Guide to Preparedness
Evaluation Using Drills and Table Top Exercises

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides information and procedures to assist in the planning and conduct of drills and tabletop exercises. It is intended to aid in understanding how drills and exercises fit into overall emergency preparedness programs, and how they can be used to develop, maintain, and enhance proficiency in preparing for and responding to emergency situations. This section introduces three types of exercises (operations center exercises, tabletop exercises, and drills), and it defines the three categories of exercise participants (players, controllers, and evaluators). Although operations center exercises are beyond the scope of this handbook, details on the planning, preparation, and execution of tabletop exercises and drills are provided in Sections 2 and 3.

TYPES OF EXERCISES

Operations Center Exercises. These are major exercises that involve the simulated implementation of an organization's emergency plan to deal with a simulated emergency of significant proportions. Operations center exercises are also known as "simulations." Operations center exercises often are described in terms that more accurately indicate the nature of the exercise. For example, they may also be called an "emergency response exercise," a "crisis management exercise," or a "procedural exercise." Compared to drills and tabletop exercises, the planning and development of an operations center exercise is a relatively complex process.

Table Top Exercises. These exercises--usually conducted around a conference table--involve the discussion of issues and "what-if" situations, and the development of response options. Examples of topics include suspected outbreak of a contagious disease or response to a multi-city bioterrorist incident. Section 2 provides additional suggestions on the planning and execution of tabletop exercises.

Drills. These are relatively simple, narrowly-focused, performance-related exercises, such as telephone activation, emergency operations center start-up, and operation of a new information system. Section 3 provides additional suggestions on drill planning and execution. Another, more complex type of exercise that stresses a "hands-on," performance-oriented approach is the field training exercise. Such exercises involve the actual deployment of people and equipment to the site of a simulated disaster. Since these exercises may require the construction of fairly elaborate mock ups or the use of actual facilities, they can be very expensive and time consuming.

EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

There are three categories of exercise participants: players, controllers, and evaluators. These terms are discussed in greater detail in Sections 2 and 3 and Appendix 1.

Players. These are employees who respond to the simulated emergency and attempt to solve the simulated problems portrayed in the scenario. Players usually perform the same duties they would be assigned during a real emergency.

Controllers. These are employees who observe the players during the "play" of the exercise and ensure they stay properly focused on the assigned tasks. An Exercise Director may be designated, and if multiple locations are involved a Senior Controller may be appointed for each site. The Exercise Director is empowered to stop exercise play or instruct the players to redirect their activities if it appears they are not following prescribed plans, policies, procedures, or practices. For tabletop exercises, the title of "facilitator" is used, rather than "controller."

Evaluators. The evaluation of exercises involves the collection of information on activities during the exercise play, for immediate or later assessment. The principal focus of exercise evaluation is to determine the adequacy of policies, plans, procedures, and practices—not individual performance. Often, controllers can do "double duty" and also serve as evaluators.
THE EXERCISE CYCLE

Although the three types of exercises listed earlier are conducted quite differently, each involves a similar process of planning, preparation, execution, and post exercise activities. The main difference is in the level of effort, which will vary from "high" for operations center exercises, to "medium" for table top exercises, to "low" for drills. Even for drills and table top exercises, however, the exercise planner should think through each stage of the exercise cycle to determine the extent of its applicability, then act accordingly. The planning activities can be accomplished concurrently or in almost any sequence, provided the planning starts with the establishment of the concept and objectives. The preparation activities usually can be accomplished in parallel with some of the planning activities. The execution and post-exercise activities, of course, are sequential, with the latter leading to the planning for the next exercise.

Each of the items in the following outline is addressed in Sections 2 and 3, to show how they pertain to table top exercises and drills, respectively.

Exercise Planning Activities
- Concept and Objectives
- Scenario
- Exercise Control
- Response Cell
- Exercise Evaluation Exercise Plan

Exercise Preparation Activities
- Exercise Materials
- Player Training and Orientation
- Facilitator Orientation
- Evaluator Orientation
- Other Preparation

Exercise Execution Activities
- Introduction of Scenario
- Exercise Activity
- Exercise Control
- Evaluation and Critique

Post-Exercise Activities
- Analysis
- Reports and Files

SECTION 2. TABLE TOP EXERCISES

Table top exercises are exploratory exchanges of information that provide an opportunity for senior and middle managers to consider emergency response policy and coordination issues before or after implementation to develop and discuss options for dealing with those issues and to develop consensus and cohesion. They may be developed to explore issues that are likely to arise in a scheduled operations center exercise, or to explore issues that were raised in past exercises of any type. To encourage participation, initiative, and freedom of thought, the sessions should be conducted in a spirit of non-attribution. A series of table top exercises may be developed in which the outcome of the first becomes the basis for the second, and so on. Examples of table top exercise issues are given in Table 2-1.
Table 2-1. Examples of Table Top Exercise Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deviations from policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Around-the-clock operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surge staffing for emergencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE TOP EXERCISE PLANNING**

As indicated earlier, the planning activities can be accomplished concurrently or in almost any sequence, except that the planning must start with the establishment of the concept and objectives.

**Concept.** The various elements of a "table top" (who, what, when, and where) are established by the person who has directed that it be scheduled, or a designated representative. The issues to be discussed often dictate who will participate (or vice versa), although others may need to attend to share in the knowledge that will be exchanged. It is important to schedule the exercise for a date, time, and location that minimize disruptions to regular schedules; otherwise, the participants may have difficulty focusing their attention on the table top issues. The questions listed below should be "answered" in developing the exercise concept. It usually is beneficial to describe the concept in writing, since a number of people will need to be informed, and the written approach will help minimize the possibility of ambiguity and misunderstanding.

- **Who** are the intended participants? Will the list of participants influence the determination of issues to be addressed or the exercise objectives?
- **What** issues will be discussed, and what policies, plans, procedures, or practices are involved (and will they be evaluated)?
- **When** will the exercise take place? Before, during, or after normal business hours? Will the players be informed about it beforehand, or will it be a "no-notice" exercise?
- **Where** will the exercise take place (the actual and simulated locations)?

**Objectives.** Why is the exercise to be held? The discussion that takes place during a table top exercise is focused on emergency preparedness planning and response issues. The objectives of these discussions--and the "table top"--may cover a variety of interests and should be clearly stated to give the participants a "road map" for the session. The objectives may be defined, for example, along the following lines: to introduce or validate a new plan or policy; to promote team-building; to achieve consensus; to provide exposure to the decision-making process during an emergency; to provide training or practice for a forthcoming operations center exercise; or to identify problems associated with implementing a new plan or procedure, perhaps to serve as the basis for a follow-on table top exercise. The objectives should be tailored to the situation, but care should be taken to limit them to those that can be accomplished in the time available.

**Scenario.** The scenario need not be elaborate or lengthy. It should establish a credible (not incredible) "story line" or set of circumstances that sets the stage for the beginning of the exercises. The best scenarios are those that involve actual facilities, processes and procedures of special concern to management, such as those considered to be inadequate in an emergency. The events that make up the scenario are intended to generate a discussion of response activities that are relevant to the group. There may be some uncertainty, ambiguity, and erroneous information, since that is to be expected during an emergency. Time compression usually is involved: the players will have a few hours to discuss response options that might take several days or more during an actual emergency. The scenario is generally given to the players, either verbally or in writing, at the beginning of the exercise. A set of questions and discussion points should be developed for use by the controllers in facilitating the discussion.
**Exercise Control Plan.** Controlling the pace and direction of a table top exercise is not as complex as it is for a major exercise, since it is a discussion forum and the players do not actually perform (or simulate) any response or recovery actions. As indicated in Section 1, table top exercise controllers usually are called "facilitators," since their role is more to help the discussion than to control it. Unless a large number of facilitators will be involved, a formal control plan will not be needed. However, those who will serve as facilitators need to be told how they are expected to perform in that position. Therefore, the exercise planner should think through the concept and objectives from a controller-facilitator point of view and determine what the facilitators will do during the exercise and how they will do it. For example, the facilitator usually starts a table top with administrative announcements and a short briefing on the scenario. This indicates a requirement for the facilitator to receive orientation on the steps involved in a "table top," and a requirement for viewgraphs or slides and probably a script or briefing outline. The need for a control plan is satisfied by identifying and itemizing the knowledge and materials the facilitators will need during the exercise—and how these requirements will be filled. Memos and phone calls will suffice, as long as the exercise planner keeps track of the action items and ensures the right people are involved.

**Response Cell.** For operations center exercises, a Response Cell is established to simulate the organizations and people the players would be likely to come in contact with during the course of the emergency. The Response Cell is sometimes called the Simulation Team. If a Response Cell is established away from the player site, an exercise telephone directory should be published so the participants will know how to contact the people and organizations that are being simulated. For table top exercises, however, the facilitators perform this function, if the need arises.

**Exercise Evaluation Plan.** Since the table top exercise is really an open discussion forum, with no pre-conceived "right" or "wrong" outcomes, the evaluation may be limited to: (1) comments on how well the players worked together as a group, and (2) comments on the adequacy of the policies, plans, and procedures that pertained to the issues discussed. In most cases, a formal evaluation plan is not needed, but the exercise planner still must identify the evaluation requirements and ensure that timely action is taken to fulfill them before the exercise. This includes such things as a determination of who will supply the evaluators, how they will be prepared for the exercise, and who will prepare a critique sheet for use by the participants. A requirement should be specified for notes to be taken of the major discussion results, for later analysis and appropriate action. If the exercise is to be used for "brainstorming" new ideas, the exercise planner might stipulate that the recorder capture any "non-traditional" viewpoints that may be expressed, even if those ideas are rejected by the group. In addition, it usually is advantageous to ensure that all remarks made by players are regarded as non-attributable, to eliminate a possible inhibiting factor and thereby get the maximum benefits from the exercise.

**Exercise Plan.** As with the control plan and evaluation plan, the exercise plan for a table top exercise is relatively simple and usually need not be a formal or lengthy document. For a short one or two hour exercise, it may be no more than a letter of instruction as to the location, date and time of the exercise, and the expected participants, or it may, for a longer exercise, include additional information. In any case, the exercise planner must determine the information the players and supporting staff elements need to prepare for the exercise. If the requirements for player orientation and training, administrative support, and logistical support are not extensive, such information can often be disseminated verbally or by simple memoranda.

**TABLE TOP EXERCISE PREPARATION**
Preparation includes the development and assembly of the materials that will be used during the exercise; the actual training and orientation of the participants, including players, facilitators, and evaluators.
**Exercise Materials.** Using the guidance developed during the planning stage—especially the control, evaluation, and exercise plans—develop and assemble all of the materials needed by the exercise players, facilitators, and evaluators.

- **Player Materials.** The principal concern is to have the materials (or simulated materials) that the players would expect to have in a real emergency. This might include maps, diagrams, charts, and lists that have been marked up to show the extent of an outbreak. Thought should be given to the need for other reference material, such as mock-ups of computer screens, reports, or plans. It can be a real "turn-off" for the players if the materials they are given are not consistent or realistic.

- **Facilitator Materials.** Consider the need for slides, and written copies of the concept, objectives, lead-in scenario, and the discussion items, "what if" situations, or scenario events that will be used to promote additional discussion related to the issues and objectives. Critique sheets for each participant (players, facilitators, evaluators, observers, and any others) should be prepared.

- **Evaluator Materials.** The principal focus should be on the preparation of materials that will make it convenient for the evaluators to take notes and record the players' main points, conclusions, and decisions. In addition, the evaluators should have access to the same material that will be supplied to the players, so they can determine the frame of reference on which the player discussions are based.

**Player Training and Orientation.** Table top exercises are frequently the first opportunity an organization has to "implement" some portions of its emergency plans and procedures. The players may never have seen a "live" demonstration of the processes involved. Therefore, it is essential that all players receive training on the policies, plans, procedures, and practices they are expected to follow during a table top (or any other) exercise. In addition, they may require orientation on the procedures used in table top exercises, to ensure the actual exercise is not spent informing the players on "how to conduct a table top exercise." Both training and orientation should be held at least a week before the exercise, to allow time for any additional research or other preparation the players might want to do on their own. The orientation should include an introduction to the issues and a discussion of the exercise setting, describing in detail what is expected of them and how they are to proceed. The key point: the players should concentrate on the issues and their impact on and relationship to the policies, plans, procedures, and practices that would be in force during an emergency.

**Facilitator Orientation.** Orientation for the facilitator must prepare that individual to be able to answer questions on processes, procedures, and plans. Most of the details concerning the orientation should be developed during the planning stage, as noted earlier. The extent to which the facilitator gets involved in the "table top" discussion often depends on the experience levels of the players; the less the involvement the better. Each facilitator must thoroughly understand the organization's emergency plans and management philosophy. The facilitator can accomplish much of the necessary preparation by reviewing the scenario, issues, objectives, and applicable plans and procedures. The facilitators should be asked to review the scenario and be prepared to help the group maintain the flow of the discussion and stay focused on the issues. If the group is large enough to be divided into two or more discussion groups, arrangements should be made to have at least one facilitator assigned to each group.

**Evaluator Orientation.** The preparation for evaluators is basically the same as for facilitators. In many cases, the facilitator will also perform the evaluation function. In that case, the only additional support needed is a skillful note-taker who is familiar with the terminology that will be used.

**Other Preparation.** This includes the administrative and logistical support arrangements that have been prescribed in the exercise "plan" or announcement. The objective is to enhance the training value of the exercise by ensuring the proper amenities are provided. The conference room should be well-lit and comfortable to encourage open discussion among the players. Writing tablets, pencils, and pens; oversized
paper, white-boards or blackboards, and markers; and other supplies must be provided. Regular breaks should be scheduled, but coffee, tea, and soft drinks should be available throughout the exercise. Food appropriate to the time of day should be served in or near the conference room.

**TABLE TOP EXERCISE EXECUTION**

Since managers and staff members typically have demanding schedules and competing priorities, the exercise should be conducted as crisply and concisely as possible. The facilitator will start the exercise with any administrative remarks that are needed, followed by an introduction of the participants and the roles they will play in the exercise. The exercise will proceed as summarized below.

**Introduction of the Scenario.** The facilitator will set the stage for the players by reviewing the exercise scenario up to the point where play is to begin and the specific events (to the extent the players would know them) that created the emergency situation. At this point, the facilitator will issue instructions to the players in the form they would be likely to receive them (verbally, by pager, cell phone, e-mail or fax). The senior player may wish to add his or her comments, but this should not alter the basic instructions. To minimize the possibility of disagreement with the instructions, it usually is best to coordinate them in advance with the person who will be the senior player (or someone higher in the “chain”).

**Exercise Activity.** The entire group (or sub-groups, if they have been established) will develop and discuss response options, pro and con arguments, impact statements, rationale, major considerations, external coordination requirements, recommendations, and other pertinent factors. Players will be encouraged to follow applicable portions of the response process outlined in their plan or procedure. All players must be encouraged to participate actively, so the individual members will learn how the other functions are influenced and affected by the matters being discussed. Only through such participation will the players be able to see how the entire organization will fit together in responding to an emergency. The outcome of this discussion period is a summary by the group (or sub-group) leadership to a senior non-participant or the facilitator, synthesizing the results of the deliberations.

**Exercise Control.** A facilitator will stay with the group (or sub-groups) throughout the discussion period. The facilitator may inject questions (including "what- if" situations) or suggestions to keep the players focused on the issues, but must be careful not to assume control, inject personal biases, or otherwise unduly influence the results. During the group summary (or sub-group summaries), the facilitator may call for questions and comments by the players, evaluators, and observers at appropriate intervals, or conduct a discussion at the end.

**Evaluation and Critique.** An evaluator (if one is assigned other than the facilitator) and a recorder should remain with the group (or sub-groups) during the discussion period. The recorders will attempt to capture the essence of the discussion, including any non-traditional views, even though they are rejected by the group; they remain silent during the discussion except to obtain clarification of matters they did not hear or understand. Following the player leadership summaries, the facilitator will conduct a critique. This may include comments by the facilitator, evaluators, and observers both on how the group worked together and the results of their discussion. Since one purpose of the table top exercise is to explore, innovate, and build team cohesiveness, there may be no expected outcome, so the critique should focus on the positive aspects of the group’s efforts. After the critique, all participants should be asked to complete and turn in the critique sheet, which is the final action of the table top exercise.

**POST-EXERCISE ACTIVITIES**

This phase of the table top exercise cycle is aimed primarily at ensuring the utility and accuracy of the plans and procedures that were employed; identifying remedial action requirements; and improving the table top exercise planning, preparation, and execution processes.
Analysis. Participant critique sheets and recorder notes should be screened to identify the possible need for changes to plans and policies, training and other remedial actions, and improvements in future table top exercises. Action on such matters will be taken in accordance with established procedures.

Reports and Files. Reporting requirements should be established by the person that directs that the table top exercise be held. In addition, the facilitator should ensure all material that is needed for future reference is collected and stored in the proper place.

SECTION 3. DRILLS

This section discusses planning, preparation, execution, and post-exercise activities for drills. A checklist is provided at Appendix C.

Drills are the least complex exercises and require the least planning and documentation. While the drill planning process should include the same logical steps involved in planning the more complex exercises, the time and effort spent on each step is small in comparison. The only documentation required usually is the supervisor's notes that summarize the drill activities and identify problem areas and follow-on activities, such as training requirements. Of course the person who designs, develops, and executes a drill may also want to save his or her notes and other records, to facilitate setting up the next drill. Examples of drills are given in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1. Examples of Drills.

| Emergency notification                  |
| Activation of emergency facilities     |
| Establishing alternate communications  |
| Accessing and using emergency databases|

DRILL PLANNING

Concept and Objectives. Drills emphasize hands-on performance, procedural skills, or reaction to instructions in a simple, practical exercise, usually to reinforce training. While the concept for a particular drill need not be written, the supervisor who designs the drill should think the matter through--and coordinate with others as necessary--to ensure there are no obvious obstacles. Some points to consider:

- Who are the intended participants? The entire work unit, one shift, one person at a time?

- What are the participants going to be asked to do? Some procedures can be combined, such as an emergency telephone alert drill, personnel recall drill, and operations center activation drill. The more that is included, the more complicated it is to observe and evaluate individual performance.

- Where will the drill activity take place? Coordination and special arrangements may be necessary to preclude disruption of normal business or other activities. For example, a work section evacuation could interfere with other activities within the building if it is not properly coordinated.

- When will the drill take place? The supervisor may want to check the projected time-off schedule, to ensure the intended participants will not be on leave, at the dentist, etc. The supervisor must also decide whether the drill participants are to be informed about it beforehand.
Why is the drill being held? The objectives of the drill usually involve the assessment of new or old plans, procedures, or systems. Drills can be used to validate an existing standard or to evaluate criteria for a new standard. They frequently are used by supervisors to help determine training requirements.

Definition of the exercise concept and objectives serves as the basis for all subsequent planning actions.

Scenario. The exercise scenario provides a logical backdrop for the exercise events that will be injected or the instruction that will be given to participants. The simpler the better. The drill planner should decide whether any pre-scripted events are needed. Most drills do not require anything more than an abbreviated scenario, describable in three or four sentences.

Exercise Control. The control process for drills consists of setting the stage for the procedures involved in the drill, observing the activity of participants, and interrupting with instructional points if necessary. This does not have to be put in writing unless, perhaps, more than one organizational entity is involved. While the control of drills is comparatively simple, measures must be in place to halt or suspend all exercise activity if they begin to interfere with normal business operations or if unsafe actions are observed.

Response Cell. If participants need to contact outside agencies in order to complete the tasks prescribed in the drill, arrangements should be made to have one or more of the drill controllers act as a response cell and simulate the agency being contacted.

Exercise Evaluation. A written plan is not needed, but the drill planner should determine in advance what the standards or criteria are, how performance will be measured, and what records need to be kept. Those who are going to observe the drill activities usually are designated to collect whatever data is needed for subsequent analysis, reporting, or documentation.

Exercise Plan. A formal plan is not needed for a drill, but the drill planner should think through the execution phase of the drill to see whether or not he or she has "touched all the bases." In brief, this means asking oneself how the drill is going to be accomplished. Simple drills require less effort, but the planner must verify any key assumptions; decide whether or not to use simulations (such as the use of alternate facilities to avoid disruption of normal operations); determine whether there are any logistic or communications support requirements; and sort out any other administrative details that might have a bearing on the exercise.

DRILL PREPARATION
The preparations for a drill should be carefully thought out but not elaborate or rigorous.

Exercise Materials. Usually, the only materials needed are the instructions and hardware that pertain to the task(s) involved in the drill, plus a pad or laptop on which the controller-evaluator can record notes.

Player Training and Orientation. The participants should already have been trained in the procedures involved in the drill. It may be necessary to give special instructions to the drill participants, even though this may not be necessary in an actual emergency. For example, in telephone notification and recall drills, each person who receives a call may be asked to record the time of receipt (or have the caller do it). Also, it may be necessary to have each person record their time of arrival at the location to which they were directed to report (sign-in log).

Controller and Evaluator Orientation. Those who will conduct and analyze the drill should be knowledgeable of their responsibilities, to ensure they will handle all aspects of the drill in a uniform manner.
Other Preparation. The drill designer must determine what, if anything, is needed to support the exercise and make appropriate arrangements in advance, including coordination with other functions.

DRILL EXECUTION

Introduction of Scenario. Drills start with an explanation of the scenario or situation, to establish the setting for the actions to be taken.

Exercise Activity. After the scenario has been explained, some input from the drill controller is required to set the exercise in motion. This may be in the form of a verbal or written instruction to the participants.

Drill Control. Once the drill activities have begun, the controllers should ensure the players stay focused on the established objectives. If necessary, the controllers should interrupt the drill to coach or teach the players on procedures that were performed incorrectly. The drill should be stopped or suspended if it interferes with normal operations or if unsafe practices are observed.

Drill Evaluation and Critique. Although a complete assessment of the drill may not be possible until after the exercise has been completed, some evaluation can be accomplished during the execution phase. As indicated above, observations of the participants' inability to perform some procedures should result in on-the-spot correction, coaching, and training, as necessary. Such judgments may also be noted on the evaluation sheet for subsequent inclusion in the overall assessment.

POST-EXERCISE ACTIVITIES

This phase is just as important as the planning, preparation, and execution phases, since it is the means through which training requirements are established. While any reports generated as a result of the drill may remain within the department where the exercise was conducted, they should be kept in an orderly and systematic fashion. This will permit the supervisor and trainers to identify problems, training requirements, and even personnel requirements.

APPENDIX A. DEFINITIONS

Drill: A brief, hands-on, performance-oriented exercise designed to evaluate specific procedures and train individuals or teams on those procedures.

Exercise Concept: The who, what, and where of the exercise. The concept identifies the purpose, type, scope, and participants of the exercise. The exercise concept cannot be established without knowing the exercise objectives.

Exercise Control Plan: The how of the exercise, for the exclusive use of the exercise control team. The control plan defines and describes exercise control responsibilities, methodologies, and procedures that will be used by the exercise control team and its integral response cell. It may also include a chronology of key exercise events. Since this document contains "inside" information about the structure, pace, and direction of the exercise, it is not intended for viewing by exercise players. However, major portions of the control plan may be extracted and provided to the players in the exercise plan or in any other suitable form. A formal control plan usually is prepared only for field training exercises and operations center exercises.

Exercise Controller: An employee--usually highly experienced or an expert in his or her field--who has been assigned the responsibility for ensuring the exercise is conducted on schedule and in keeping with the exercise objectives. For table top exercises, the term exercise facilitator (or simply "facilitator") is used.
instead of "controller." Controllers may not participate or assist in the exercise play. Collectively, exercise controllers--including those assigned to the response cell--comprise the exercise control team.

**Exercise Evaluation:** A formal, objective assessment of capabilities, as measured against criteria established concurrently with the exercise objectives. The evaluation focuses on the adequacy of plans, policies, and procedures, not on the role of individuals.

**Exercise Events:** Simulated occurrences that are part of the exercise scenario. Depending on their timing and the probable availability of information, events may be revealed to players at the start of the exercise or at an appropriate time after exercise play has begun.

**Exercise Facilitator:** See Exercise Controller.

**Exercise Objective(s):** The why of the exercise. Exercise objectives form the basis for the exercise concept and the exercise evaluation. They usually are limited in number and scope, and they must be expressed clearly, concisely, and in terms that will permit data collection and evaluation.

**Exercise Plan:** The how of the exercise, for the exercise players. It contains all the requirements, information, and instructions that pertain to the preparation and participation of the players.

**Exercise Play:** The activities of exercise participants who simulate the activities they would perform in a real emergency. This term is used primarily in reference to operations center exercises, in which both the emergency and the responses by the exercise players involve a high degree of simulation.

**Exercise Players:** The exercise participants who are confronted with the emergency conditions that are provided in the exercise scenario and who must gather data, evaluate options, make decisions, and otherwise respond to the emergency situation.

**Exercise Scenario:** A credible series of events related in story form that give the exercise participants a rationale to activate their emergency response system and manage the situation. It may be short, or long depending on the complexity of the exercise.

**Field Training Exercise:** An exercise that involves the actual deployment of resources into the "field" with the subsequent physical use of those resources to deal with a simulated situation.

**Operations Center Exercise:** A procedural exercise designed to test the communications, plans, policies, and procedures of the facilities that have been established to direct operations during emergencies.

**Response Cell:** Functional experts who simulate the organizations that are not participating in the exercise, but which the exercise participants would be likely to contact--or be contacted by--during an actual emergency. Depending on the exercise, the cell could include first responders such as emergency medical services and the police and fire departments, hospitals and primary care physicians, Federal, county, and local emergency organizations, and the media. The Response Cell is sometimes called the simulation team.

**Simulation Team:** See Response Cell.

**Table Top Exercise:** A versatile exercise involving relatively senior management or supervisory personnel, usually gathered in relative seclusion in a conference room (hence the name), as opposed to actual work sites or emergency operations centers. A table top exercise usually involves discussion of functional issues or
coordination issues that might arise in an emergency. Its purpose is to attune the participants to the scope and implications of their response options with respect to policies, plans, and procedures.

APPENDIX B. CHECKLIST FOR TABLETOP EXERCISES

The following checklist assists in the planning, preparation, execution, and post exercise activities associated with tabletop exercises.

A. TABLE TOP EXERCISE PLANNING

Concept & Objectives:

- Who will participate?
- What issues will be discussed?
- When will the table top exercise be conducted and how long will it last?
- Where will the table top exercise be conducted?
- Why is the table top exercise being held--what are the objectives?

Coordination. Obtain the necessary approvals for the exercise concept and objectives, to ensure: (1) it meets the need of management, and (2) it will not interfere with normal operations.

Scenario:

Lead-In Scenario. Develop a scenario that will support the exercise issues and objectives. This will be briefed to the players at the beginning of the exercise.

Follow-On Scenario Events. Develop scripted events or a set of questions to be injected after the table top discussion begins that will ensure the players remain focused on the issues and objectives.

Exercise Control:

Source of Expertise: Determine which department will supply the exercise controllers (identified from here on as "facilitators").

Control Guidance/instructions. Define the facilitators duties, including the degree of control they are to maintain over the table top discussion.

Materials for Facilitators. Identify requirements for PowerPoint projection and copies of written materials such as the concept, objectives, scenario, issues, discussion items/questions, or other items needed to enhance or facilitate the exercise, and determine who is to provide them.

Response Cell: Determine what outside organizations the table top players might need to consult in order to properly dispose of the exercise issues and objectives. State the requirement for the facilitator (or others involved in the control of the exercise) to prepare themselves to play the role of those outside organizations.

Exercise Evaluation:

Evaluation Requirements. Determine the evaluation requirements for the table top exercise, based on the exercise objectives.
Source of Expertise. If evaluators are required (in addition to the facilitator), determine which department will supply them.

Materials for Evaluators. Identity requirements for any items that will assist the evaluators, and determine who is to provide them. This may include note-taking guides oriented toward the issues and objectives, and copies of materials given to players and facilitators.

Written Record. Determine whether or not a record of the proceedings will be kept, and if so, who will do it. For example, stenographers could be assigned to each discussion group or exercise control/evaluation personnel could take notes. Establish the level of detail that should be recorded, such as "all options that are discussed" or "only the options that are accepted." Decide whether remarks will be recorded on an "attributable" or "non- attributable" basis.

Critique Sheet. Assign the responsibility for developing the critique sheet that exercise players will be asked to fill out at the end of the table top.

Evaluator Guidance/Instructions. Specify evaluator responsibilities. Develop instructions for the evaluators, to encompass any areas of special interest. Develop guidance for the facilitator on evaluation areas for which he or she usually is responsible, such as the exercise "wrap-up" (first impressions from the facilitator and any other evaluators present; distribution, collection, and disposition of critique sheets).

Exercise Plan: Information about the exercise needs to be given to the players, but it does not have to be put into a formal "plan."

Information Needed by Players. After weeding out information the players do not need to know in advance, tell them about the table top exercise (date, time, duration, location, participants, issues, objectives, and preparation required.)

Materials for Players. Identify requirements for maps, diagrams, charts, lists, and other reference material required by players during the exercise, and determine who is to provide them.

Other Administrative Matters. Identify administrative and logistical support that will be provided by your department and that which is required from other sections, such as food, beverages, supplies, audio-visual equipment, etc.

B. TABLE TOP EXERCISE PREPARATION

Exercise Materials:

Player Materials. Prepare maps, diagrams, charts, lists, and other reference material required for the exercise, or ensure they are prepared.

Facilitator Materials. Prepare slides and written materials such as the concept, objectives, scenario, issues, discussion items/questions, and other items, or ensure they are prepared.

Evaluator Materials. Prepare materials for the evaluators, or ensure they are prepared (e.g., note-taking guides, copies of materials given to players and facilitators, and any special instructions).
Player Training and Orientation:

Player Materials. Give the exercise players the materials you have decided they need in advance of the exercise.

Player Training. Verify that players have received any training that is considered a prerequisite for involvement in the exercise.

Player Orientation. Prepare a briefing for players that will be given at the beginning of the exercise. This should focus on the procedures that will be used in the table top exercise. In particular, they should be told what is expected of them and how they are to conduct themselves. It should be emphasized in the briefing that the emphasis of the exercise is on the issues, objectives, and related policies, plans, and procedures, not their individual performance or comments during the exercise.

Facilitator Orientation: Conduct an orientation session for facilitators, based on guidance developed during the planning stage. Ensure they understand the degree of control they are expected to exercise over the table top discussion. Ensure they are given the opportunity to review all of the materials that will be used during the exercise. The facilitators must understand the exercise objectives and their relationship to the issues that will be discussed. Conduct a "dry run" with the facilitators, to identify and discuss areas that might be "difficult" for them, and attempt to arrange for whatever support is required.

Evaluator Orientation: Conduct an orientation session for evaluators and recorders, to ensure they understand what they are to do, based on guidance developed during the planning stage.

Other Preparation: Make all administrative arrangements for food, beverages, supplies, audio-visual equipment, etc.

C. TABLE TOP EXERCISE EXECUTION

Welcoming Remarks: These usually are given by a senior person, perhaps the one who requested that the exercise be conducted.

Administrative Remarks: This can include information such as the timing of breaks, the availability of refreshments, and the locations of rest rooms. It should include remarks on the handling of telephone and pager messages (pagers and cellular phones should be collected). Also, the roles of all facilitators, evaluators, recorders, and observers should be pointed out.

Introduction of Scenario: Since the players have already been given the exercise objectives and issues, it should be sufficient to refer to them, without going into any great depth about them. The facilitator should review the exercise scenario up to the point where the players are to start their discussion. Break the group into sub-groups, if appropriate, and give the players their instructions for the discussion.

Discussion Period and Exercise Control:

- Ensure a facilitator, evaluator, and recorder are assigned to and stay with each group or sub-group.
- Observe the discussion and insert scripted "events" or "what-if" questions to stimulate further problem solving efforts, which should be conducted within the framework of the emergency response plan.
- Take appropriate notes, recording both deficiencies and good points. If appropriate, bring deficiencies to the group's attention immediately, rather than waiting until the end.
**Discussion Group Leader Summary:** After the discussion period ends, the group leader (or sub-group leaders) presents a summary of the conclusions, recommendations, and rationale. This can be discussed further, if appropriate, to ensure any dissenting opinions are surfaced.

**Critique:**

Facilitator/Evaluator Critique Comments: Conduct a post-exercise critique, to give the players immediate feedback on their approach to the issues.

Participant Critique Comments: Verbal comments may be solicited. However, a critique sheet should be filled out and left by each participant.

Collect Materials: Gather up all critique sheets and other written notes by recorders, evaluators, and observers.

**D. POST-EXERCISE ACTIVITIES**

**Analysis:** Review critique sheets and reorder notes to determine what follow-on actions are required.

**Reports:** Prepare any reports that are required.

**Files:** File any materials that are needed for the record or that can be used in a subsequent exercise.

**APPENDIX C. CHECKLIST FOR DRILLS**

*This checklist is meant to help drill designers organize their thoughts. Although most drills are fairly simple, the process is the same as for the more complex exercises.*

**A. DRILL PLANNING**

**Concept & Objectives:**

- Who will participate?
- What is to be tested? [Examples: emergency notification plan, new computer system, emergency operations center activation procedure]
- When will the drill be conducted and how long will it last?
- Where will the drill be conducted?
- Why is the drill being held--what are the objectives?

Coordination. Obtain the necessary approvals for the exercise concept and objectives, to ensure: (1) it meets the need of management, and (2) it will not interfere with normal operations.
**Scenario:**

Lead-In Scenario. Develop a scenario that supports the drill objectives.

Follow-On Scenario Events. If necessary, develop scripted events to be injected during the drill to ensure there is sufficient activity throughout the drill.

**Exercise Control:**

Source of Expertise. Determine which department will supply the exercise controllers.

Control Guidance/Instructions. Define the controllers’ duties.

Materials for Controllers. Determine what materials, if any, the controllers will require and who is to provide them.

**Response Cell:** Determine what outside organizations the players might need to contact during the drill and how this will be handled. If a Response Cell is to be established, define the requirement; be sure to arrange for adequate communications and instructions on how the players can contact the Response Cell. If there is to be no Response Cell, state the requirement for the controller to prepare themselves to play the role of those outside organizations.

**Exercise Evaluation:**

Evaluation Requirements. Determine the evaluation requirements for the drill, based on the exercise objectives.

Source of Expertise. If evaluators are required (in addition to the controller), determine which department will supply them.

Materials for Evaluators. Identify requirements for any items that will assist the evaluators, and determine who is to provide them.

Written Record. No action required.

Critique Sheet. Assign the responsibility for developing the critique sheet that exercise players will be asked to fill out at the end of the drill.

Evaluator Guidance/Instructions. Specify evaluator responsibilities. Develop instructions for the evaluators, to encompass any areas of special interest. Identify the standards or evaluation criteria that are to be met during the drill. Determine how the critique will be handled (first impressions from the controller and any other evaluators present; distribution, collection, and disposition of critique sheets).

**Exercise Plan:** Information about the exercise needs to be given to the players, but it does not have to be put into a formal plan.

Information Needed by Players. After weeding out information the players do not need to know in advance, tell them about the drill (date, time, duration, location, participants, objectives, and preparation required).

Materials for Players. Identify what materials are required for the actions to be performed during the drill.
Other Administrative Matters. Identify administrative and logistical support that will be provided by your department and that which is required from other sections, if any.

**B. DRILL PREPARATION**

**Exercise Materials:** If applicable, prepare lists of exercise telephone numbers and voice call signs. Ensure the materials identified during the planning process are available.

**Player Training and Orientation:**

Player Materials. Give the exercise players the materials you have decided they need in advance of the drill.

Player Training. Verify that players have received any training that is considered a prerequisite for involvement in the drill.

Player Orientation. An orientation for players usually is not necessary prior to the day of the drill.

**Controller Orientation:** If necessary, conduct an orientation session for controllers, based on guidance developed during the planning stage.

**Evaluator Orientation:** If necessary, conduct an orientation session for evaluators, to ensure they understand what they are to do, based on guidance developed during the planning stage.

**Other Preparation:** Make all administrative arrangements for food, beverages, supplies, audio-visual equipment, etc., if required.

**C. DRILL EXECUTION**

**Welcoming Remarks:** This usually does not apply to drills.

**Administrative Remarks:** If necessary, inform any new personnel of what is involved in a drill. Also, give the players any exercise material they need, such as lists of exercise telephone numbers, radio call signs, etc.

**Introduction of Scenario:** The controller should review the exercise scenario up to the point where the players are to start their drill activities.

**Drill Activity and Exercise Control:** To the extent possible, ensure a controller and, if necessary, an evaluator, are assigned to and stay with each group of players. Take appropriate notes, recording both deficiencies and good points. If appropriate, bring deficiencies to the players' attention immediately, rather than waiting until the end.

**Critique:**

Controller/Evaluator Critique Comments: Conduct a post-exercise critique, to give the players immediate feedback on their performance.

Participant Critique Comments: Verbal comments may be solicited. However, a critique sheet should be filled out by each participant.
Collect Materials: Gather up all critique sheets and other written notes by recorders, evaluators, and observers.

D. POST-EXERCISE ACTIVITIES

**Analysis:** Review critique sheets and notes taken by controllers and evaluators to determine what follow-on actions are required.

**Reports:** Prepare any reports that are required.

**Files:** File any materials that are needed for the record or that can be used in a subsequent exercise.