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From Response to Recovery:
Everything you need to know to
design a great exercise.

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Agenda

- The benefits of an exercise program.
- The five different types of exercises.
- The different types of effective exercise agendas.
- The composition of the exercise design team.
- Development of an exercise plan.

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The Big Question

- Ask “Why are we doing this exercise?”
 - The answer to this simple question holds incredible value.
 - The answer to this question will tell you:
 - What type of exercise will likely deliver the best results.
 - Your goal, scope, and objectives.
 - Which narrative will yield those results.
 - How to keep you and the design team on track.

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A Few Definitions...

- What are you exercising?
 - Emergency Response
 - Business Continuity
 - Disaster Recovery
- Terminology
 - “Exercise”
 - “Test”



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What is an Exercise?

- An activity designed to promote emergency and business preparedness.
- An exercise consists of the performance of duties, tasks, and operations in a way very similar to the way they would be performed in a real emergency.



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Who Should Do an Exercise?

- Any company that wants to be prepared for a possible emergency, disaster, or other unexpected event.
- Any company that wants to see if their plans work.

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Benefits of an Exercise Program

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What Are the Benefits?

1. Evaluate communication between the different groups.
2. Assess the allocation of resources and manpower.
3. Assess the adequacy of current procedures and policies.
4. Determine overlaps and holes in planning.

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What Are the Benefits?

5. Clarify roles and responsibilities.
6. Improve individual performance.
7. Motivate employees.
8. Build confidence.
9. Increase general awareness of proficiencies, deficiencies, and gaps.



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Exercise Program Outcomes

- Improve overall company readiness.
- Improvement of the emergency management system within the company.
- Individual training.
- A current and up-to-date plan.



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Five Types of Exercises

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Types of Exercises



- Orientation
- Drill
- Tabletop
- Functional
- Full-scale

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Orientation Exercise

- Introduces the participants to plans and procedures.
- Introduce new plans or revise old ones.
- Requires no previous experience.
- Helps orient new staff or leadership.
- Planning cycle: About one month.
- Exercise time: From 30 minutes up to 2 hours.

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Orientation Exercise Example

- Review a new plan or changes to a plan at a staff or department meeting.
- Whenever possible, use simple scenarios to make it more interesting.



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Drills

- Tests a single emergency response function.
- Involves actual field response.
- Practice or test under realistic conditions.
- Involve all levels of responders.
- Planning cycle: About one month.
- Exercise time: Between 10 and 60 minutes.

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Drill Examples

- Fire exercise.
- Radio exercise.
- Tornado exercise.
- Earthquake (drop & cover).
- Shelter-in-place:
 - Weather.
 - Violence.
 - Hazardous materials.



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Tabletop Exercise

- Two types of tabletops:
 - Basic version: Seeks to solve problems in a group setting via discussion and brainstorming.
 - Advanced: Includes the introduction of inputs and an exercise simulation team acting as proxies for the outside world.
 - Multiple options for advanced tabletops.

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Tabletop Exercise Basics

- A bit more realistic and a tad more stressful than previously mentioned exercises.
- Planning cycle: About two months.
- Exercise time: at least 3 hours.
 - Briefing time: 30 minutes.
 - Exercise time: 2 hours.
 - Debriefing: 30 minutes.

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Tabletop Exercise Options

- **Basic:**
 - Simple narrative.
 - May have several additional inputs/injects to exercise.
 - **Format:**
 - Introduce concepts, topic, and narrative: 15 mins.
 - Divide into groups (if applicable), have group discuss top activities, select a spokesperson: 45 mins.
 - Report out: 10 mins per group.
 - Debrief: 30 mins.



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Tabletop Exercise Options

- **Advanced:**
 - More detailed narrative.
 - Additional inputs/injects to exercise.
 - Simulation team in the room acting as outside world.
 - **Format:**
 - Introductions, goal, objectives, exercise briefing: 30 mins.
 - Exercise: 2 hours.
 - Debriefing: 30 mins to one hour.



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Functional Exercises

- Exercise is fully simulated:
 - Participants perform the activities.
- Involves more participants:
 - Simulators, observers/evaluators, bigger design team.
- Introduction of sophisticated inputs and other media.
- Planning cycle: About 2 to 3 months.
- Exercise time:
 - Briefing: 30 mins.
 - Exercise: 3 to 4 hours.
 - Debrief: 45 mins to 1 hour.

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Full-Scale Exercises

- Involves field response:
 - Actual mobilization of field personnel and resources, and the actual movement of emergency response teams, equipment, and resources.
- Events are in real time, complex, and detailed.
- Highly stressful; rigid time schedule.
- Expensive.
- Planning cycle: About four months (minimum).
- Exercise time: 2 to 8 hours.

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Composition of the Exercise Design Team

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It All Starts With the Planning...

- The devil is in the details – exercises are about detail planning.
- What you need is a great design team!



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Start With a Good Design Team

- Who should be on it?
 - Strong knowledge of the overall business.
 - A depth of knowledge in their area or department.
 - Facilities person who really knows the buildings.
 - IT person who knows all the servers.
- How many?
 - 5-7 committed individuals.

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Design Team Attributes

- Creative, works well under pressure.
- Detailed.
- Keeps on schedule and on track.
- Willing to question and push back.
- Good at keeping a secret!
- Will not be participating in the exercise.

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Design Team Model

- Three to four meetings.
- From 90 minutes to two hours each session:
 - Meeting #1: Review exercise basics, goals, objectives, narrative exercise #1. Discuss possible inputs, issue homework.
 - Meeting #2: Review homework, validate inputs, review exercise plan #2, issue homework.
 - Meeting #3: Review homework, discuss simulation and exercise process.
 - Meeting #4: May be necessary for more complex exercises.

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Exercise Scope

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Exercise Scope

- What is the scope of your exercise?
 - Who is actually “playing” in the exercise?
 - Who will be simulated?
- This could include:
 - Teams you want to exercise.
 - Identified business units or departments.
 - Specific personnel.
 - Geographical area.



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Determining the Scope

- Consider if there:
 - Are any areas/plans/groups you are concerned about.
 - Have been any recent changes in people, plans, processes, equipment.
 - Are any known weaknesses you wish to explore, such as new plans or no plans at all, new staff, or uninterested managers.



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Exercise Goal



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Exercise Goal

- The goal is the defined purpose of the exercise, answering the initial question: *why are you doing this?*
 - A brief and clearly stated aim of what you want the exercise to accomplish.
 - Along with the exercise objectives, the goal drives the exercise design and keeps you on track.



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Exercise Agenda

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Exercise Agenda

- How long should an exercise be?
 - The actual exercise experience should be between two and three hours. This is the exercise “play” time.



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Exercise Agenda

- If the exercise “play” time is *less than 2 hours*:
 - Hard to get a lot of issues raised and problems resolved in such a short amount of time.
 - Players know they can drag their feet a bit and not have to solve an issue because time will run out.
 - The story and the issues have not had time to evolve and develop.

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Exercise Agenda

- Is there value to having a longer “play” time?”
 - It depends on *why you are doing this*.
 - If the goal is to “wear them out,” then you will need a longer “play” time.
 - Most learning will occur in 2 to 3 hours, then players get tired and the activity needs to shift.

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Exercise Objectives

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Exercise Objectives

- Most exercises have between 3 and 5 overall objectives for all participants.
 - There may be additional objectives for a specific team, a department, or location.
- Used to guide the design and to assess the outcome.

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Exercise Objectives

- Establish the direction of the exercise.
- Control the direction of the injects.
- Narrow the scope of the exercise plan.
- Keep the exercise and participants on track.
- Used to evaluate the exercise.



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Writing Objectives

- Objectives should be clear and understandable.
 - Simple.
 - Concise.
 - Measurable (when possible).
 - Achievable.
 - Realistic and challenging.



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Exercise Communications

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Communication Instructions

- What do participants need to know about exercise communication?
 - Who it is appropriate for them to communicate with and who it is not.
 - What your expectations are for communication.
 - Who the Simulation Team is and how to use them, if using one.
 - How to use the phone directory, if using one.

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Evaluation Tools

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Evaluation Tools

- Evaluation tools are covered in Weeks 5 and 6 however they need to be mentioned in the exercise plan so the participants know what to expect.
 - Debrief sessions.
 - “What worked?”
 - “Where are opportunities for improvement?”
 - Participant evaluations.
 - Sim Team evaluations.
 - Observer forms.

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Instructions to Participants

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Participant Instructions

- Tell them what they can expect and what is expected of them during the exercise.
 - Explain decisions and actions to simulators as if they were the real people.
 - Clarify that exercise is not a “fault-finding activity.”
 - There is no grade.
 - There will be lots of mistakes; this is a good thing!
 - Explain what time-outs are and how they would work.

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Exercise Narrative



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Exercise Narrative

- The narrative prepares participants for the exercise experience.
- It is the overview of the event, the beginning of the movie.
 - Describes the environment at the time of the exercise.
 - Provides all of the necessary background information.



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Narrative Ideas

- A great source of narrative ideas is the hazard risk assessment of your location.
Consider:
 - Natural hazards.
 - Your neighbors.
 - Human risks.
 - Infrastructure failures.
 - Environmental risks.
 - Geo/political risks.



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Narrative Considerations

- Precipitating event, realistic?
- Did it just happen? Or is it already in progress?
- How did you find out about it? What is/was the discovery mechanism?
- What details do you present? I.e., time, location, extent of damage.
- What were the sequence of events?
- Do you have initial damage reports?
- What are the weather conditions?



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Assumptions

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Exercise Assumptions

- Determine the exercise assumptions you want people to have in mind.
 - You must clearly lay out the ground rules, what people can assume, and clear instructions about what is indeed going on.
 - If you don't, participants will construe their own assumptions and information – which may not be in line with yours, and which may derail the exercise.

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Exercise Assumptions

- Written exercise assumptions further place assumed limits on the participants.
 - These types of assumptions answer nagging questions that people will likely have, especially those that would hold up the exercise. Examples:
 - “The city will be isolated for 24 hours.”
 - “The telephone systems are operating normally.”
 - “All employees who are ‘supposed to come to work’ show up.”



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Artificialities



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Exercise Artificialities

- All things that are blatantly not true.
- Are things that exist only for the purpose of the exercise:
 - Date change.
 - Time of day change.
 - Equipment that is available or not available but is necessary to conduct the exercise.
 - Conditions in place necessary to conduct the exercise.

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Developing Exercise Injects

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Role of the Design Team

- The design team should create most or all of the exercise injects.
- They can write general injects or ones based on their specific subject matter expertise.
- More about how the team does this later in this session.

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What Are They?

- Injects continue the story that began in the baseline narrative.
 - The only way participants know something is different or has changed is by the injection of new information via an exercise “inject” or “input.”
 - Think of them as a continuation of a story: acts in a play or chapters in a book.

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What Do They Do?

- Most injects ultimately ask the recipient **to do something**.
 - Therefore, most injects will have one or more questions to be answered or issues to be resolved.
- They can also provide:
 - Additional background information for the storyline.
 - An “FYI” relating to an issue or situation.

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What Do They Do?

- Injects should influence action among the participants in at least one of four ways:
 - **Decide:** Make a decision about something.
 - **Verify:** Gather information.
 - **Consider:** Discuss and/or consult with others.
 - **Defer:** Place on priority list for later action.

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Inject Development

- Injects (or inputs) are the “drivers” in the exercise by:
 - Exposing unresolved issues.
 - Always pointing to the objectives.
 - Continuing to describe the disaster incident, environment, and/or situation.
 - Stimulating the participants to action.



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Inject Development

- An inject can escalate an initial or primary problem from the narrative and create secondary or tertiary problems. Think of these as cascading issues:
 - Primary event: Earthquake.
 - Secondary event: Building collapse.
 - Tertiary event: Building fire.



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Inject Delivery Methods

- Phone.
- Walkie-talkie.
- Fax.
- Email.
- Radio broadcast.
- Video.
- “Runner.”
- Actor playing a role.



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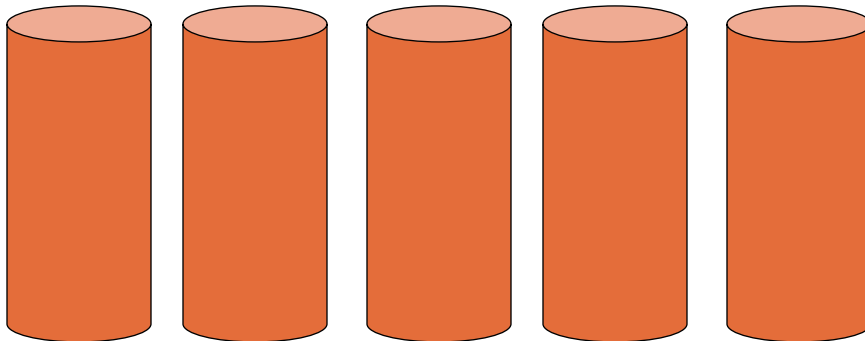
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Inject “Buckets”



People

Facilities

Technology

Mission-Critical
Activities

Communication

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Inject Components

- Time: When will it be delivered?
- Who: Who is the source of the inject?
- Mode: What is the method of inject transmission?
- Recipient: Who receives the inject?
- Content: What does the inject say?
- Notes: "Acting tips" or other notes helpful to the delivery of the inject or the expected action as a result of the inject.



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Inject Examples

Call #	Exer. Time	Sim Team Caller	From Who	Call Script (read and then place in your own words as the calling party)
RADIO BROADCAST				
1	00:00	John	Joe Johnson, Chief Engineer, Engineering Dept.	We were in the middle of performing maintenance on the generator, so it was empty and in pieces. We've started to put it back together, but we won't be back up and running for another 15-20 minutes.
2	00:02	Alex	Rex Spacey, Chief Engineer	The Loading Dock area of 555 Whitney Street is quickly filling up with water. We expect that there will ultimately be 5-6 feet of water in this area with 5-6 inches throughout the rest of P-3, including the mailroom. I expect we'll be out of the building at least a week.
3	00:04	Jean	Janet Cassidy, Security Guard	We have a number of employees trying to get to P-3 to get their cars. Do we let them in? Is there any risk of electrocution due to all the water?

Note: You may find it useful to keep injects on a spreadsheet so they can be sorted in various ways.



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The Big Day!

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Exercise Day

- For large exercises (or multiple-site exercises), if possible, have an assistant.
- Make sure you have ways of being reached during the exercise: a reliable mobile phone with a fully charged battery, and landline numbers.
- Make sure all of the exercise team has checked in: Simulators, observers, others.
 - If people have not shown up, go to “Plan B.”

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It's "Go Time"



- Once the exercise begins you need to *float*.
 - Don't get into active problem-solving. Delegate and move on. "Hang loose."
- Keep your fingers crossed! (Get out the rabbits foot!) Once it starts, much of it is out of your control.



Starting Line: The Exercise Briefing

- To begin the exercise, distribute the exercise plan(s) and review the document.
 - Answer any questions regarding the plan and narrative.
 - If using A-V tools, it is helpful to start with something to impart realism and set the tone.
- At the conclusion of the briefing, give the participants a few minutes to get in place and grounded.



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Exercise Pacing

- When do you start delivering the injects? When do you stop?
 - Do they normally start with an Incident Action Planning session or some other activity? If so, start about 5 minutes after that has concluded.
 - Once the injects begin, you need to be aware of how the participants are doing and modulate the flow based on your observations.
 - The last inject should be delivered no later than 10 – 15 minutes from the end of the exercise. At that point they can simply wait a bit and it will be over! Don't deliver great injects at the end. They will never get to them.

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Exercise Pacing

- Remember the basic question: *“Why are we doing this?”*
 - The answer is not, “To overwhelm the participants.”
 - For the participants, there is sometimes a fine line between boredom and wanting to run out of the room screaming – your task is to find that line.
 - Make sure the injects are challenging the participants, but not sending them over the edge. Signs to look for:
 - Obvious frustration amongst the players.
 - You over hear griping or complaining – go speak to them and resolve it then and there.

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Keeping Track of it All

- Pay attention – float around.
 - Observe participant behavior.
 - Eavesdrop on calls and conversations.
 - Check in with evaluators/observers.
 - Check in with Simulation Team.
 - If possible, take lots of photos.
- Capture observations in writing during the exercise.

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The Exercise is Over

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Exercise Debrief

- Purpose:
 - To review and evaluate the exercise and the experience.
 - To provide feedback regarding plans and performance.
 - To review lessons learned from the exercise.
- This is a critical activity.

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Exercise Debrief

- Review the purpose of a debriefing (in the public sector it is called a “hotwash”).
 - General feedback from all participants.
 - Share the experience and the learnings.
- Review the debrief format. Inform team leaders or senior staff if they will be asked to share observations.
 - If so, let them know when in the flow of the debriefing they will be needed.

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Debriefing Guidelines

- Debriefing should be quick; should usually last no more than an hour.
- Things in particular to note include issues regarding:
 - Command.
 - Control.
 - Coordination.
 - Communication.

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The Two Questions to Ask

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- You only need to ask **two** questions to get all of the data you need:
 - “What worked in this experience?”
 - “What didn’t work?”**OR**
 - “What needs improvement?”

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Written Evaluation

- Written evaluations are crucial. People may write down what they don't feel comfortable saying out loud:
 - Overall reaction to the experience.
 - Adequacy of the existing plan.
 - Exercise itself.
 - Need for further training and exercises.
 - Suggestions for improvement.

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A Big Thank You

- It may go without saying, but the participants (Simulation Team, evaluators, design team, assistants) all need a big **THANK YOU** at the end.
 - The facilitator definitely needs to say this.
 - Hopefully a senior management person will say the final 'thank you.'

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The After Action Report (AAR)

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What Is an AAR?

- Document providing a complete summary of the exercise.
- A formal record of the exercise.


National Manufacturing, Inc.

National Manufacturing, Inc.
Incident Management Team Exercise
30 November 2009 – Exercise Report



Prepared by
Regina Phelps, CEM, RN, BSN, MPA
Emergency Management & Safety Solutions
18 December 2009

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Why Do an AAR?

- After-action reporting serves the following important functions:
 - Documents response activities.
 - Identifies problems/successes during response and recovery operations.
 - Analyzes the effectiveness of the components of the Incident Response plan and program.
 - Describes and defines a plan of action for implementing improvements.



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The Raw Material

Begin by reviewing all documentation from the exercise, including:

- Your notes.
- Evaluator / Observer forms.
- Participant / Simulation team evaluations.
- Debriefing notes.
- Photos.
- Materials prepared by the participants:
 - Communications.
 - Incident Action Plans.
 - Executive briefings.
 - Completed Message Center forms.
 - Status board/flip charts sheets.



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Report Components

- The main body of the AAR:
 1. Executive summary.
 2. Recommendations.
 3. Facilitator's observations.



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Report Components

- The remainder of the document consists primarily of Appendices.
 - Debriefing summary.
 - Exercise plan.
 - Exercise images.
 - Evaluator/Observer comments.
 - Evaluations:
 - Participant.
 - Sim Team.
 - Participant lists:
 - Exercise team.
 - Design team.
 - Sim Team.
 - Any specialized reports or information addendums.



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Next Steps



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Schedule the Next Exercise

- How do you know if your improvements made a difference and your plan works?
 - Have a disaster and see how it goes?
 - OR
 - Do another exercise!
- The latter is less stressful.



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The Power of Exercises

- We have come full circle in the process of exercise design.
 - Notice: It begins and ends with an exercise.
- Exercises remain one of your most powerful tools to improve your program, your plan, and your people.

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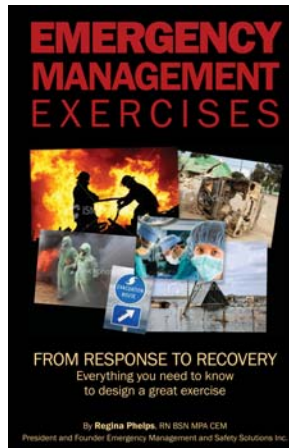
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New Book!



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Thank you

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