

TABLETOP TRAINING EXERCISE

GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATOR

The information contained below is for the facilitator's reference only. It is not a strict instructional manual and it is not expected that you will follow the instructions precisely. It is intended to give you a feeling for how the exercise should be carried out. Once you have experience with the exercise you will have your own style and your own way of facilitating and setting up your tabletop sessions.

Optimum number of participants: 20 (recommend no fewer than 5 and no more than 30). This number allows all of the participants to interact and will not be too overwhelming for the facilitator(s).

Site of session: The exercise should take place in a room that comfortably seats the number of participants you are expecting, ideally with space for them to spread out and to take notes. In addition, the room needs to be conducive to group discussion; this should be a conference-style room or desks that can be placed in a "U" or circle so that everyone can see each other.

Time: Most tabletop exercises take around 3 hours to complete but this is very dependent on the individual exercise and the skill/knowledge level of the participants. Make sure that you take the time to accurately assess how long it will take to go through each section in the exercise and try to keep the session close to your schedule.

Equipment:

- Blackboard, dry erase board, or paper with an easel and appropriate writing utensils (chalk or markers). You will likely want to illustrate some points using the board or you may want to encourage brainstorming.
- Tent cards or other name tags or cards. This encourages the participants to address one another by name and does not require that you memorize everyone's name during the initial introductions.
- Copies of the tabletop exercise broken up into sections. Make sure there is one copy for each participant. Having the exercise broken up into small sections discourages the participants from reading ahead and helps to keep the session focused on the issues at hand. Ensuring that each participant has his/her own copy is more conducive to following along and allows the participants to take notes right on the handouts.
- Bring any other applicable handouts, references and demonstration materials. Handouts should be copied for the participants but you may also choose to bring other reference material for them to access during the session, such as relevant journal articles, emergency preparedness policies, etc. You can include anything that might make it easier for you to illustrate the important points you are trying to make or might encourage the session to be more interactive.

To Begin:

- Introductions: Introduce yourself; take the time to give the participants an idea of your background and what you have to bring to the exercise. Then ask them to introduce themselves using their name and giving you some of their background. You can choose the information that will be helpful to you as you facilitate the session. Examples are: their current profession, agency they work for, why they wanted to attend the session and what they hope to gain.
- Hand out the session overview which includes an introduction to the exercise, the roles involved, the rules of the session and the exercise goal and objectives. Give a brief overview of how the tabletop exercise will proceed. For some, this will be the first time they participate in such a session. Tell them they will be encouraged to speak up and why this will add to their learning experience. Explain your decision to use nametags and any other items you may have.
- Now it's time to start the tabletop exercise. Hand out section one. Ask one participant to begin reading the exercise out loud. This reading can proceed in a round-robin fashion, depending on how much reading there is to do.
- Read the first question out loud and ask the participants to respond. Encourage them to discuss the answer and try to get them to state the correct response. After a few minutes, according to your pre-thought out schedule, provide them with the answer and move on. (Suggested answers to the questions are contained on alphabetized pages corresponding to the numerical pages – i.e. section 1 – A, section 2 – B, etc.) Proceed to the next section and repeat the process until all sections have been read and all questions answered.

At End:

- Summarize the key points illustrated by the exercise; tie these points back to the learning objectives.
- Acknowledge source materials, copyright where applicable, and exercise attribution if appropriate.
- Hand out any resource materials not already distributed.
- Ensure that evaluations are completed and collected.