



Designing and Conducting Tabletop Exercises (TTX)

Colorado Safe Schools Summit

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DESIGNING TABLETOPS



Designing Tabletop Materials

Narratives

- Describe context and direction.
- Provide background information.
- Establish a common frame of reference.



Significant events

- Present new information.
- Prompt expected actions.



Messages

- Provide information.
- Complicate the exercise.
- Initiate specific actions.



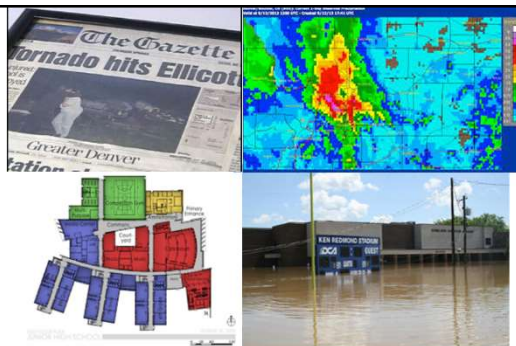
Choosing a Scenario

- For a tabletop exercise to be effective, the scenario must be relative to the audience. You wouldn't want to plan a Tsunami exercise for an area where this is not a possibility.
- To create a TTX you will first want to look at the threats and hazards for the school. Choose one of the threats that are most likely to be faced by the community.
- Once you have selected a threat or hazard, it's time to do some background research.

Adding Perspective

- Has the threat or hazard occurred in the past in your community? Has it ever occurred in a similar or nearby community? Can you add historical notes, pictures, press clippings or other information to your scenario?
- Consider providing participants with real life pictures, maps, weather reports, in an effort to put the participants in the moment.
- By adding this perspective you can make a scenario come to life and add a real world feel to your exercise.





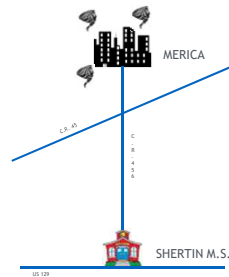
Writing the Narrative

- Provide the who, what, where and when in your initial scenario. If using real place names or even fictional ones, make sure they are included in participant maps.
- If technical terms are used, provide participants with a glossary or technical guides



For Instance...

EF Rating	Wind Speeds	Expected Damage
EF-0	65-85 mph	Minor damage: damage to roofs, A/C units, porches, etc. Damage to trees, falling branches, etc. Minor damage to crops, etc.
EF-1	86-110 mph	Broken windows, minor structural damage, exterior siding, etc. Damage to trees, falling branches, etc. Moderate damage to crops, etc.
EF-2	111-135 mph	Considerable damage: roofs torn off, mobile homes destroyed, etc. Damage to trees, falling branches, etc. Severe damage to crops, etc.
EF-3	136-165 mph	Severe damage: roofs torn off, mobile homes destroyed, etc. Damage to trees, falling branches, etc. Severe damage to crops, etc.
EF-4	166-200 mph	Extreme damage: roofs torn off, mobile homes destroyed, etc. Damage to trees, falling branches, etc. Severe damage to crops, etc.
EF-5	201+ mph	Extreme damage: roofs torn off, mobile homes destroyed, etc. Damage to trees, falling branches, etc. Severe damage to crops, etc.



Shertin Tornado

Example: On today's date at 11:15 am, the Shertin Middle School Principal receives word from a concerned staff member that a funnel cloud was witnessed just ½ a mile north of the school. The principal turns on his weather radio and hears that several F2 tornados have recently touched down in Merica, a small town 3 miles to the north.



Significant Activities

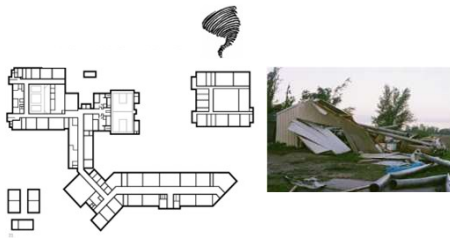
- Used to guide the exercise
 - Consider if participants need to change focus or refocus, based on the desired outcome of the exercise
 - Prompt participants to use EOP or certain functions.
- i.e. the tornado scenario just described does not cause participants to use shelter-in-place functions, the facilitator may need to ramp up the perceived danger

Shertin Tornado

Example: The school janitor rushes into the office and reports seeing a tornado on the ground, north of the gymnasium and that he saw a small shed on a neighboring property, "just blown away."



Capture the Moment ...



Messages or Injects

- Used to further guide the exercise and/or test other portions of the EOP
- May come in the form of radio/telephone messages to players, news radio, television news, media requests, man-on-the street or any number of other sources
- Used by the facilitator to correct lapses in judgment and/or provide necessary information that the players may not have requested.
- Generally made on the fly by the facilitator

Shertin Tornado

Example: Incident Commander receives a phone call from the Governor's Office asking for more info on the status of the school, whose population includes a nephew of the Governors. (To guide the players that they need to be communicating with outside community members)

Or: 9News is reporting that kids have been observed evacuating the school with the tagline, "WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?" (To guide the players away from using evacuation in this case)



Questions

- Questions should be asked of the participants after the initial narrative, after significant events and after messages.
- If we are testing our response to an emergency these questions would be simple such as, "What do you do now?" or "What does your Emergency Plan say?".
- If we are evaluating plans or teaching new concepts, the questions may need to be more detailed. For instance you might ask, "How do homeroom teachers communicate their students accountability to the principal?", followed by a discussion about the plans validity or instruction to teachers on how they accomplish this task.

The facilitator in this case may need to wear two hats, that of instructor and that of facilitator, switching back and forth.

Example Exercise

Narrative

It is a pleasant fall day. Students are in transition; some are being dropped off and some have been in the school for a few minutes. An unknown male enters the building through the unlocked front door and walks into the admin offices. Shortly thereafter, screams can be heard from the administrative offices.

You see the man leave the front office area and walk down the hall away from your location toward the classrooms, with a handgun.



Example Exercise

Introduction Questions

1. What information is most important when notifying emergency responders at this time? Why?
2. What is the school's procedure for securing the school and keeping students and staff safe in an active shooter event?
3. What does your emergency organizational structure look like? Who is in charge?
4. What other actions should be taken by students or staff?

Example Exercise

Significant Activity

Local law enforcement arrives on the scene within five minutes of the 911 call and enters the building in Active Shooter formation. They begin a systematic search of the school for the intruder.



Example Exercise

Significant Activity Questions

1. Who is in charge? What does your emergency organizational structure look like?
2. How do you integrate with the emergency responders' Incident Command Post when in a Lockdown situation?
3. How do you deal with internal and external communications? Is this written in your plan?
4. What are the key actions by students and staff at this point in the scenario?

CONDUCTING TABLETOPS



Tabletop Exercise Participants

Facilitators ▪ Set up the exercise. ▪ Facilitate the exercise.	Evaluators ▪ Review exercise objectives and evaluation criteria. ▪ Observe and document actions during the exercise.
Players ▪ Determine who will play each role. ▪ Take active role following EOP procedures.	Support Staff ▪ Help with logistics. ▪ Assist with room setup.

Setting Up the Tabletop

- Select location.
- Prepare exercise materials.
- Determine room layout, arrange room, and test equipment.
- Decide on administrative and logistical issues.
- Develop checklist for needed materials and other items.



What location would you choose? Why?

Conducting the Tabletop



- Welcome players & introduce facilitator/evaluators.
- Present exercise purpose.
- Explain exercise conduct.
- Introduce narrative and significant events.
- Ensure all players are involved.
- Encourage and facilitate problem solving.
- Control pace and flow of exercise.
- Evaluate exercise progress.

Tips for a Successful Tabletop

The facilitator encourages exercise play by:

- Monitoring the pace of the discussion.
- Encouraging involvement.
- Managing messages.
- Helping players manage time.
- Addressing conflicts, confusion, and frustration.



Evaluation

At the end of the tabletop:

- Assess how well the exercise objectives were achieved.
- Identify opportunities for improvement for:
 - Improved response capabilities.
 - Revising plans, policies, and procedures.



Hot Wash

- Unresolved Issues (Responsibility for Follow-Up)
- Suggested Changes to Plans, Policies or Procedures
- Identified Resource Needs and Shortfalls
- Additional Training & Exercise Needs

Questions?



*THANK YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS TO
MAKE OUR SCHOOLS SAFER!*

Feel free to contact the Center at:
www.Colorado.gov/CSSRC or,
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