

Exercises Gone Wrong

When the Exercise Becomes the Disaster

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The Center for
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Exercises

- ✓ Regulations require them
- ✓ Grants require them
- ✓ Accreditation requires them

Required

Exercises in the News

- Exercises make great news
- Media loves the full-scale
 - Businesses
 - Organizations
 - ✓ Healthcare/Public Health/EMS
 - ✓ Emergency Management
 - ✓ EMS
 - ✓ Fire Service

Easy, Fun, Showy, Right?

Are exercises:

- Easy?
- Fun?
- A good use of time?
- A good use of money?



How do we know if they are worth the time and the money?



What happens when exercises go wrong?



What happens when exercises go wrong?

How can we see to it that they do not?

Objectives

At the end of this session the participants will be able to:

- Describe at least three exercise-planning pitfalls that could endanger participants.
- Evaluate three exercise disasters and recommend steps which could have been taken to avoid the problems.
- List the steps in the “Building Block” approach
- Demonstrate the ability to write clear, measurable objectives to ensure an effective exercise.

Content

Content based on speaker experiences and approximately 40 interviews with:

- Participants
- Developers
- Controllers
- Evaluators
- Research

Story Time

I will tell you some stories ...
Then you tell us some stories



When Exercises are:

Dangerous

Frustrating

Damaging to your Image

A Waste of Time



Exercises Gone Wrong

- “Heart attack on a hill”
- “Command Center Collapse”
- “Oh, so many stairs”
- “Opps ... we forgot about the victims”
- “You told me I would ride in an ambulance. I’m going to ride in the (*bleep*)ing ambulance!”

Just Plain Embarrassing!

Santa Cruz – evacuation drill when the ambulance wouldn't start ... TV camera covered it all!

- ED Doc says, “Nope! No exercise in MY ED today”
- Decon tent didn't have all of the parts to run water



Extremely Dangerous

Mock armed intruder receives permanent brain injury

Active shooter in a nursing home

Deadly

Woman killed in Florida active shooter exercise



Your Turn for Stories

- In small groups share some of your experiences with Exercises Gone Wrong
- Facilitators will record and report out for the groups
- 10-15 minutes



Solutions

- Next move to solutions
- What could have been done before the exercise to have avoided the problems?
- 10-15 minutes



Report Out

Group facilitators report for the groups.



Biggest Problem

Organizations were not ready!

1. Had not done a table top
2. Had not reviewed plans
3. Did not have a “Call Off” word.
4. Did not have a Safety Plan
5. Poor communication

Follow-Up Flops

Not Using the After-Action-Report

1. Did not complete the Corrective Action Matrix
2. Did not review and DO the things identified
3. Did not review the AAR from the previous exercise

Exercises Can Be

- Safe
- Effective
- A Good Use of Time
- Valuable Planning Tool
- Useful in Budgeting



Most Importantly

- Exercises can help us be better at what we do
- Help make our communities safer

Isn't that what it is all about?

Questions/Final Comments

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