Practice Makes Perfect: Conducting a Tabletop Exercise to Practice your Disaster Plan

Annie Peterson
What’s a tabletop exercise?
Why practice?

- Test the disaster plan in lower-stress environment
- Identify further planning needs
- Strengthen collaboration
- Test collections salvage plans

Created by Gabriel Vogel from Noun Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 9:00</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ground rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – noon</td>
<td>Scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 12:45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45 – 1:45</td>
<td>Group debrief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 – 3:00</td>
<td>Follow up meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles

Facilitator

• Introduces scenarios and injects
• Guides discussion
• Keeps time
• Supports constructive conversations

Created by Adiyogi from Noun Project
Roles

Participants

• Individuals with specific roles named in the disaster plan
• Speak up and participate

Created by Anna Sophie from Noun Project
Observers

- Individuals without a specific role, or an alternate for a role
- Watch, learn, and provide feedback
Roles

Note Taker

• Takes notes
• Supports facilitator

Created by Rediffusion from Noun Project
• This is a test of the plan, not of you. We’re practicing and learning together.
• You may refer to your disaster plan. Use it as a guide, not a rule book. If a different action makes more sense, take it and we’ll note it.
• Observers: hold comments and questions until the end.
• Accept the scenario and work within the given parameters.
• Ask the person you would ask in a disaster for clarification.
• If you would call a person in real life, you can talk to them in this exercise, but do not make real calls to people outside this room.
Sample scenario
Warm up scenario

**Scenario**
Monday, 9:00am
Free donuts are available in the break room of the building where you work

**Discussion**
What actions do you take?
Who do you contact?
Discuss why you made that decision.
Warm up scenario

**Inject 1**
Monday, 10:00am
The donuts are gone!

**Discussion**
What do you do now?
Discuss how you made that decision.
End of scenario!
• Library building located next to museum on main campus
• Special Collections within the main library building
• 2 FTE staff in Special Collections, 4 student workers
• Fire suppression
  • Wet pipe sprinkler system
  • Sprinkler heads at ceiling above shelving
• Special Collections formats include:
  • Bound volumes
  • Manuscripts
  • Documents
  • Photographs
  • Audiovisual materials
  • Paintings
  • Objects
Friday, May 22, 10:00am

Shelves in the main stacks are being moved to accommodate oversized materials. Two library employees are working together on moving the top shelves in a range. Special collections materials are stored on the lower shelves. As they lift up a top shelf, the shelf hits a sprinkler head, and the broken head starts pouring water onto collections.

The fire department and campus police are automatically alerted.
What actions are you taking?
Who are you in talking to?
  • Who called you, and who are you calling?
What additional information are you seeking, and where are you finding it?
Key Themes

- Initial response
- Communications plan
- Information seeking
Friday, May 22, 10:45am

The fire department arrived at 10:45am and shut off the water to the building.

The sprinkler head flows at 25 gallons per minute, so the sprinkler head has released 1,125 gallons of water onto the collections stored beneath it.

Non-emergency personnel have been asked to stay out of the immediate area while the fire department inspects the building for safety.
• Who are you communicating with?
• What are your next action steps?
  • Do you need to be at the scene of the disaster?
  • How did you make that decision?
• What documentation are you collecting?
• What are your priorities at this point?
Key Themes

• Communications
• Prioritization
• Decision making
Building a scenario

- Information gathering
- Draw from past experience
- Use your imagination

Created by Hyemm.work from Noun Project
Debriefing

- Identify opportunities for improvement
- Transition out of the exercise

Created by Maxim Kulikov from Noun Project
Next steps

- Follow up meetings
  - Further discussion
  - Prioritize next planning activities
  - Assigning tasks and creating deadlines
Emergency management cycle

1. Mitigation
2. Preparedness
3. Response
4. Recovery
Planning and Facilitation Tips
Planning and facilitating tips

• Effective facilitation is key
  • Clear instructions
  • Good timekeeping
  • Refer to the group agreement
  • Support productive conversations
Planning and facilitating tips

- Introductions
- Warm up scenario
- Parking lot for questions
- Display the group agreement
Planning and facilitating tips

• Logistics
  • Schedule 1/2 day or more
• Snacks
Planning and facilitating tips

- Closing exercise
- Pre- and post-exercise evaluation
  - Participants
  - Observers
Resources: tabletop exercises

- Alameda County Statewide Medical and Health Exercise 2017: Tabletop Exercise Facilitator Guide

- FEMA: Organizational Tabletop Exercises: Customizable Hazard-Specific Scenarios
  - [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1426103634437-a1928f190773b74ca029bf2f5793e958/ap_organizational_ttx_ppt_all_6_hazards_form_031015_final_508.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1426103634437-a1928f190773b74ca029bf2f5793e958/ap_organizational_ttx_ppt_all_6_hazards_form_031015_final_508.pdf)

- Penn Mission Continuity Program: Guidelines for Conducting Tabletop Exercises
  - [http://www.upenn.edu/missioncontinuity/documents/Penn_Mission_Continuity_TableTop_Exercise_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.upenn.edu/missioncontinuity/documents/Penn_Mission_Continuity_TableTop_Exercise_Guidelines.pdf)

- United Educators: How to Conduct a Tabletop Exercise
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XK_dZkb9Kw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XK_dZkb9Kw)
Resources: facilitation

- *The Art of Gathering*, Priya Parker

- Closing Ideas: Facilitation tips, tools, and techniques. University of Maine Cooperative Extension
  - [https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/closing-ideas.pdf](https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/closing-ideas.pdf)

- Facilitation Tools for Meetings and Workshops
  - [https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/tools.pdf](https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/tools.pdf)

- Mutual Aid Disaster Relief Workshop Facilitation Guide
Now what?

- Identify stakeholders & roles
- Get some buy-in
- Schedule a date
- Build your scenario

Created by Edwin PM from Noun Project
Thank you!

Annie Peterson

annie.petersen@lyrais.org