Tabletop Exercises: Training That Works & Manages Risks
Senior Management Decision

How much risk is acceptable versus the cost of reducing that risk?
There are two kinds of Executives; those that have lived through a crisis and those that will...
Are you Prepared for this....
Training & Exercises

• Training and exercises are **invaluable** tools for preparing staff and testing emergency plans.
• Training and exercises should **reinforce concepts in the organizational emergency plan**.
• Training should be **conducted regularly** (Reality: *we do what we've practiced, not what is in the plan*).
Through Exercises, Organizations Can:

- **Test** and evaluate **plans**, policies, and procedures.
- **Reveal** planning **weaknesses**.
- **Reveal** gaps in resources.
- **Improve** organizational **coordination** and **communications**.
- **Clarify roles** and responsibilities.
- **Train personnel** in roles and responsibilities.
- **Improve** individual **performance**.
- **Gain** program recognition and **support** of officials.
- **Satisfy regulatory requirements**.
Types of Exercises

**ORIENTATION**
"Getting Everyone on Board"

**DRILLS**
"Single Procedure"

**TABLETOP**
"Group Discussion"

**FUNCTIONAL**
"Stressful Simulated Events"

**FULL-SCALE**
"Resources Deployed"
What is a Tabletop Exercise?

- A tabletop exercise is a facilitated, scenario-based group discussion; used for centuries
- Typically 3 hours to 6 hours in duration
- Scenarios should be chosen on priority response and recovery events
- There are many formats and methods
Why Conduct Tabletop Exercises?

- Clarify Roles and Responsibilities
- Evaluate Plans and Procedures
- Develop Effective Teamwork
- Assess Resources and Capabilities
- Identify Needs and Solutions
- Cost Effective & Validation
Why Conduct Tabletop Exercises?

- Are **low-stress discussion** of coordination and policy within the organization and/or between the organization and other agencies.
- Provide a good environment for **problem solving**.
- Provide an opportunity for key agencies and stakeholders to become **acquainted** with one another, their interrelated roles, and their respective responsibilities.
- Provide good **preparation for a functional exercise**.
- Cost Effective
- Minimal Disruption
- Validation of your Plan
Developing an internally designed tabletop exercise normally evolves over a 1-month to 2-month period if conducted properly.
Table Top Facilitator

- Quality & success of a table top exercise often depends on the skills of the facilitator
  - Instructor Qualifications
  - Subject Matter Expert
  - Experience
  - People Management
  - Motivational Skills
  - Analytical Skills
Tabletop Exercise Preparation

- Pre Exercise Preparations
  - Emergency/Continuity Plan Reviews
  - Management Interviews
  - Guide/Handout Preparations
  - Audio/Video Content
  - Power Point Preparations
- Flipchart and markers
- Note taker
- A/V equipment
- Extra seats for observers
- Name Plates
- Copies of the exercise scenario
- Emergency plans/Incident focus
- Additional pre-incident information
- Participant evaluation form
The After Action Process

- Immediate Debriefing
- Evaluator and Participant Comments
- Written Comments from Evaluators
- Comprehensive Report
- After Action Meeting (Weeks Later)
- Improvement Ideas and Implementation
- Supplemental Training
Outsourced vs. In-House

- Difficulty of Exercise
- Human Resources
- Cost Benefits
- Liability/Expertise
- Time Management
- Third Party Validation
Complacency is Risky Business

- The Myth of the Non Profit Veil
- Will Insurance Pay
- Standard of Duty
Questions