



Preparedness - Best Practices

Tabletops, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises have many things in common regarding planning:

- All exercises should be driven by real vulnerabilities in the school.
- All exercises should have structured text specific actions and objectives.
- All tabletops need: narrative, problem statement, simulated messages.
- All exercises should be communicated broadly about the event, the planning time frame, and the justification for it because everyone in the school community is a stakeholder in one way or another.
- All exercises should have a good facilitator; this is central to the event and central to ensuring it is a comfortable learning exercise for everyone.

Best practices in conducting exercises:

- Practice a variety of different scenarios based upon risks in the school and community:
 - Utilize hazard / vulnerability data; and
 - Collaborate with disaster and emergency services.
- Practice a variety of different response procedures, such as lockdown, shelter-in-place, and evacuation.
- Communicate information in advance (with parents, media, and surrounding neighborhoods as appropriate).
- Evaluate and document lessons learned in an after-action report.
- Implement exercise outcome recommendations.
- Test the capacity of all agencies—not just schools.
- Drill under different conditions (time, weather, pull key people such as the building engineer).
- Identify weaknesses and areas for improvement.
- Build design succession of exercises to instill feelings of “success.”
- Make sure that one objective is to implement the Incident Command System to be compliant with National Incident Management System and to better integrate with local response agencies.
- The goals of an exercise are NOT achieved UNTIL the recommendations from the after–action review are implemented.