

Designing an Environmental Health Exercise

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Marion County
OREGON
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Agenda

- Describe the steps involved in designing an exercise.
- Tell you how we used those steps at the Marion County Health Department.
- How to integrate PHAB standards into an exercise.

What is a Tabletop Exercise

- A tabletop exercise simulates an emergency situation in an informal, stress-free environment.
- The participants - usually decision makers - gather around a table to discuss general problems and procedures in context of an emergency scenario.

Why conduct exercises?

- Test and evaluate plans, policies, and procedures.
- Reveal planning weaknesses and gaps in resources.
- Improve organizational coordination and communications.
- Train personnel in roles and responsibilities.
- Satisfy regulatory requirements.

Why would an EH program conduct an exercise?

- Encourages staff to be actively involved with emergency preparedness.
- Strengthen relationships with community partners.
- Opportunity for a cooperative between all EH staff.

Step 1: Needs Assessment

- Informs scenario selection
 - Conducting a needs assessment will help you define the problems, establish the reasons to do an exercise, and identify the functions to be exercised.

Step 1: What MCHD Did

- MCHD's needs assessment showed that a water exercise had never been done.
- There have been many opportunities to participate in food-related exercises and events, but not water.

Step 2: Define the Scope

- Defining the scope of an exercise means putting realistic limits on the issues that you identified in the needs assessment.

Step 2: What MCHD Did

- We started out with a very large scope and ended up with a reasonable event that could be managed within our county.
- We attempted to partner with City A, but they were unavailable. City B was willing to participate.
- Identified staff from MCHD and City B whose participation as necessary.

Step 3: Purpose Statement

- The **purpose statement** is *a broad statement of the exercise goal*. It focuses and controls the whole exercise. The purpose statement.

Step 3: What MCHD Did

- Build partnerships
- Test MCHD's ability to be subject matter experts
- Meet requirement for accreditation

Step 4: Design Objectives

- An **objective** is a description of the performance you expect from participants to demonstrate competence. Objectives go hand in hand with the purpose statement but are more specific and performance based.
- SMART

Step 4: What MCHD Did

1. Test EH as subject matter experts, interaction in a water event
2. Test City of Hubbard Water System Emergency Response Plan (ERP)

Step 5: Compose a Narrative

- An **exercise** is *a scenario that simulates an emergency*. Part of this scenario is the narrative, which is a brief description of the events that have occurred up to the minute the exercise begins. The narrative has two important functions.
- First, it *sets the mood* for the exercise. Participants need to be motivated to participate. The narrative captures their attention and makes them want to go on.
- Second, the narrative *sets the stage for later action* by providing information that the participants will need during the exercise.

Step 5: What MCHD Did

- The only damage resulting from this earthquake is to the City of Hubbard water system. All roads/bridges/ overpasses are in tact. Transportation is not affected. Cell phone towers are still standing. Communication is not affected.

Step 6: Major and Detailed Events

- Major and detailed events are occurrences - large or small - that take place after and as a result of the emergency described in the narrative.

Step 6: What MCHD Did

- MCHD decided to format them into a MESL (master scenario events list).
- This is **MANDATORY** for full scale and functional exercises, and **OPTIONAL** for discussion based exercises.
- We did it this way to keep us on track.

Step 7: Expected Actions

- **Expected actions** are the actions or decisions that you want participants to carry out in order to demonstrate competence. It is necessary to identify expected actions in order to.

Step 7: What MCHD Did

- We listed these on the MESL
- Only the exercise design team and exercise moderator had access to the expected outcomes

Step 8: Prepare Messages

- Messages are used to communicate detailed events to exercise participants. One message may represent an event, or several messages may be needed to notify the participants of the event. Messages serve one purpose: To evoke a response - that is, to cause exercise participants to make decisions and take actions that meet the exercise objectives.

Step 8: What MCHD Did

- We realized after the fact that we skipped this step.
- The exercise participants needed more instruction than we gave them.
 - They acted outside of their appointed roles.

Step 9: Conduct the Exercise



Other Things to Consider

- News release – not a real event, just practice; inform the public of ongoing public health efforts
- Partner agency provided coffee/donuts, MCHD provided lunch
- Where should exercise be held?
 - Travel?
 - AV equipment needs
 - Room size

Step 10: Evaluation

- Good evaluation can help the organization identify:
 - Whether the exercise has achieved its objectives.
 - Needed improvements in the emergency management system.
 - Training and staffing deficiencies.
 - Needed operations equipment.
 - Need for continued exercising of the plan and the emergency management function

Step 10: What MCHD Did

- Everyone filled out exercise evaluation (hotwash) during lunch, went over results as a group, everyone self reported their thoughts.

Step 11: After Action Report

- The good, the bad, and the ugly
- AAR is used to inform policy revisions and future exercises
- Share AAR with staff and partners
- Send thank you notes to partners involved

Accreditation

- MCHD logo on everything
- Standardized minutes form
- At the event we made sure everyone signed in
- AAR met PHAB criteria

For More Information

- FEMA Independent Study IS-139
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Questions?