

# Nebraska Tornado Incident: Tabletop Exercise

## Situation Manual

This Situation Manual (SitMan) provides exercise participants with all the necessary tools for their roles in the exercise. Some exercise material is intended for the exclusive use of exercise planners, facilitators, and evaluators, but players may view other materials that are necessary to their performance. All exercise participants may view the SitMan.

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## Exercise Overview

<b>Exercise Name</b>	Nebraska Schools Tornado Exercise
<b>Exercise Dates</b>	
<b>Scope</b>	This exercise is a workshop planned for 1.5 hours. Exercise play will include facilitated participant discussion.
<b>Mission Area(s)</b>	Protection, Response, Recovery
<b>Core Capabilities</b>	Public Information and Warning, Operational Coordination, Communications
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ensure partners and stakeholders receive needed information in a timely manner to facilitate coordination.</li><li>2. Coordination of school and partner agency people and resources to establish the Incident Command Structure to support response and recovery.</li><li>3. Assess incident complexity, identify ICS organizational structure and needed functional areas, and coordinate i transfer of command as emergency responders, disaster relief agencies, and volunteers are on the scene.</li></ol>
<b>Threat or Hazard</b>	Tornado
<b>Scenario</b>	There are two scenarios. In scenario one, a tornado has struck the school, cutting a swath of destruction southwest to northeast in the community and damaging 50 homes and businesses. The school structure sustains damage. There are significant injuries, one serious and one fatality. In this scenario, players are to think about the ICS structure and make decisions based on that structure. Scenario two is similar, but emergency responders, volunteers, and disaster relief is on the scene. Players are challenged to think about how the ICS structure changes.
<b>Sponsor</b>	Nebraska Department of Education; University of Nebraska Public Policy Center
<b>Participating Organizations</b>	Nebraska Department of Education; University of Nebraska Public Policy Center; local Nebraska Educational Service Units (ESUs); local Nebraska school officials/staff/faculty

**Exercise Name**

Nebraska Schools Tornado Exercise

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## General Information

### Exercise Objectives and Core Capabilities

The following exercise objectives in Table 1 describe the expected outcomes for the exercise. The objectives are linked to core capabilities, which are distinct critical elements necessary to achieve the specific mission area(s). The objectives and aligned core capabilities are guided by elected and appointed officials and selected by the Exercise Planning Team.

Exercise Objectives	Core Capability
Ensure partners and stakeholders receive needed information in a timely manner to facilitate coordination.	Public Information and Warning
Coordination of school and partner agency people and resources to establish the Incident Command Structure (ICS) to support response and recovery.	Operational Coordination
Assess incident complexity, identify ICS organizational structure and needed functional areas, and coordinate transfer of command as emergency responders, disaster relief agencies, and volunteers are on the scene.	Operational Communications

Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated Core Capabilities

### Participant Roles and Responsibilities

The term *participant* encompasses many groups of people, not just those playing in the exercise. Groups of participants involved in the exercise, and their respective roles and responsibilities, are as follows:

- **Players:** Players are personnel who have an active role in discussing or performing their regular roles and responsibilities during the exercise. Players discuss or initiate actions in response to the simulated emergency.
- **Observers:** Observers do not directly participate in the exercise. However, they may support the development of player responses to the situation during the discussion by asking relevant questions or providing subject matter expertise.
- **Facilitators:** Facilitators provide situation updates and moderate discussions. They also provide additional information or resolve questions as required. Key Exercise Planning Team members also may assist with facilitation as subject matter experts (SMEs) during the exercise.
- **Evaluators:** Evaluators are assigned to observe and document certain objectives during the exercise. Their primary role is to document player discussions, including how and if those discussions conform to plans, policies, and procedures.

## Exercise Structure

This exercise will be a multimedia, facilitated exercise conducted through a web-based platform (Zoom). Players will participate in the following scenarios:

- Scenario 1: A tornado has struck the school, cutting a swath of destruction southwest to northeast in the community and damaging 50 homes and businesses. The school structure sustains damage. There are significant injuries, one serious and a fatality, the media specialist.
- Scenario 2: Emergency responders, volunteers, and disaster relief is on the scene. The Incident Command Structure changes.

Participants review the situation and engage in group discussions. After these discussions, participants will engage in a moderated plenary discussion in which a spokesperson from each group will present a synopsis of the group's actions based on the scenario.

## Exercise Guidelines

- This exercise will be held in an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
- Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (i.e., you may use only existing assets) and insights derived from your training.
- Decisions are not precedent-setting and may not reflect your organization's final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions.
- Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve response and recovery efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus.

## Exercise Assumptions and Artificialities

In any exercise, assumptions and artificialities may be necessary to complete play in the time allotted and/or account for logistical limitations. Exercise participants should accept that assumptions and artificialities are inherent in any exercise, and should not allow these considerations to negatively impact their participation.

- The exercise is conducted in a no-fault learning environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated.
- The exercise scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented.
- All players receive information at the same time.

## Exercise Evaluation

Evaluation of the exercise is based on the exercise objectives and aligned capabilities, capability targets, and critical tasks, which are documented in Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs).

Evaluators have EEGs for each of their assigned areas. Additionally, players will be asked to

complete participant feedback forms. These documents, coupled with facilitator observations and notes, will be used to evaluate the exercise and compile the After-Action Report (AAR).

## Scenario 1: Tornado and Incident Command

### Scenario 1

1400 Hours

It is one of those mid-May afternoons just after lunch, and students are heading in from recess at their Elementary School. The humidity is high, the temperature is already 91, and the barometric pressure is falling. The forecast is for thunderstorms later in the day. The National Weather Service recently issued a severe thunderstorm warning in your four-county region. Both teachers and students seem edgy. This is an early release day due to school staff professional development.

1420 Hours

The weather radio in the main office suddenly goes off, and an announcement from the national weather service indicates a funnel headed toward the school from the southwest. It will be there in 10 minutes. School teachers and staff direct students to their shelter-in-place locations.

1430 Hours

The tornado struck the school, cutting a swath of destruction southwest to northeast in the community and damaging 50 homes and businesses. The school structure sustains damage, and power is lost.. An “all clear” message from local emergency management is broadcast, signifying that post-storm damage assessment can commence. There are significant injuries to staff and students requiring medical attention, mainly cuts and lacerations from broken and flying glass. One of the teachers, days from retirement, suffered a stroke, is also the safety officer by coincidence. Emergency responders are not yet on the scene.

### Key Issues

- Coordination
- Communication
- Response

### Questions

1. What actions do you take immediately following the “all clear” siren?
2. When the Incident Command Center/Emergency Operations Center must be activated, then:
  - a. What specific functions need to be established? (Command, Safety, Public Information, Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration)
  - b. How will the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) be established and maintained?

- c. What is your ICS structure? (Who is in what role? In other words, who is the Incident Commander, Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Section Chiefs, etc.?)
  - i. The Safety Officer suffered a stroke. Is there a contingency person trained to take on this ICS role? Who is this, and how are they notified?
  
- d. What would each of the following persons or teams be doing **if activated**?
  - i. Incident Commander
  - ii. Liaison Officer
  - iii. Public Information Officer
  - iv. Safety Officer
  - v. Operations Section Chief
  - vi. Logistics Sections Chief



## Scenario 2: Tornado and Incident Command with Emergency Responders

### Scenario 2

1455 Hours

Emergency responders, community partners, parents, and anxious do-good volunteers have arrived at the school building. The first emergency responder to show up is a deputy sheriff. EMS arrives next and transports the stroke victim to a nearby hospital. Power remains out, and while landlines are not working, cell phones are operable.

### Key Issues

- Response
- Operational Coordination
- Incident Command Structure

### Questions

1. Now that first responders have arrived on the scene, how does the Incident Command System change? Who assumes the role of incident commander in this scenario?
2. What conditions precipitate the transition from response to recovery operations, and how does the Emergency Operations Center begin to transition to a recovery organization while maintaining continuity?
  - a. Do the functional areas of the ICS change? If so, how?
  - b. What resources are needed as you transition from response to recovery? How are these resources obtained and managed?
3. What messages are communicated to partners, stakeholders (including parents), and the general public? How is this information shared? What does this communication look like for individuals on the scene? Individuals who have not yet arrived at the school?