

Nebraska Disaster Behavioral Health: Tabletop Exercise 2023

Situation Manual

July 26, 2023

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

Exercise Name	Train Derailment	
Exercise Date	July 26, 2023	
Scope	This exercise is a workshop planned for 2.0 hours. Exercise play will include facilitated participant discussion.	
Mission Area(s)	Response	
Core Capabilities	ASPR Capabilities	DHS Capabilities
	Foundation for Health Care and Medical Readiness	Planning
	Health Care and Medical Response Coordination	Response
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss deployment mechanisms for disaster behavioral health responders. 2. Identify response partners and needed response coordination with these partners. 3. Discuss mechanisms to ensure adequate and flexible staffing for high need situations. 4. Review and discuss plans to address access needs for non-English speaking populations. 	
Threat or Hazard	Train Derailment	
Scenario	A train derailed while carrying hazardous materials. The derailment impacts air quality and raises broader environmental safety concerns. Because of the severity of the hazardous materials, an evacuation zone has been ordered.	
Sponsor	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; University of Nebraska Public Policy Center	
Participating Organizations	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Nebraska Behavioral Health Regions, Nebraska Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster, local Nebraska health departments, local Nebraska emergency management agencies, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center	

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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 ASPR / HSEEP
Discuss deployment mechanisms for disaster behavioral health responders.	Foundation for Health Care and Medical Readiness / Planning
Identify response partners and needed response coordination with these partners.	Health Care and Medical Response Coordination/ Response
Discuss mechanisms to ensure adequate and flexible staffing for high need situations.	Foundation for Health Care and Medical Readiness / Planning
Review and discuss plans to address access needs for non-English speaking populations.	Foundation for Health Care and Medical Readiness / Planning

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 activity that can be conducted in person or in Zoom. Players will participate in the following scenarios:

- Scenario: A hazardous train derailment that affects the broader community infrastructure and has long-term implications.

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 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 impact their participation negatively.

- 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 inform any After-Action Reports (AAR).

Module 1

Day 1

A freight train derailment occurs at an intersection of a medium-sized community. It is late afternoon on a sunny but windy spring day. Among the motor vehicles involved are a tractor-trailer rig carrying a non-hazardous load (used frying oil) and 17 automobiles. The 70-car train is carrying hazardous and toxic chemicals. Fourteen of the cars derail at the intersection, and one car carrying vinyl chloride ruptures and catches fire, releasing phosgene and hydrogen chloride into a toxic plume. Vinyl chloride is an industrial chemical used mainly to produce PVC pipe. Both gases cause eye and skin irritation, vomiting, unconsciousness, and respiratory issues. There are numerous injuries, prompting medical attention.

Fire and EMTs are on the scene, notice the labels for vinyl chloride, don their PPE, and work to put out the fire. In the meantime, they call emergency management to warn of the plume. The spring southerly winds are directing the plume cloud to the town center, one mile away. The local hospital, as well as a number of businesses and homes, lie directly in this path. Officials and the news inform the public that these chemicals could be above safe quantities in the air and water, causing concern for public safety. Public officials have told citizens to evacuate the town center and areas in the path of the plume immediately.

Emergency Management asked the American Red Cross to establish a shelter in a school gymnasium two miles south of the derailment site for evacuees. Red Cross has two Disaster Mental Health Associates available to work in the shelter, but each of them are at least six hours away. The shelter manager asked emergency management if there are local behavioral health professionals available to work at the shelter at least until Red Cross Disaster Mental Health personnel arrive. Red Cross will only accept licensed mental health professionals for this role.

Hospital patients are evacuated to medical facilities in nearby communities, and public health and hospital representatives redirect those with immediate medical needs to nearby community medical facilities.

Key Issues Day 1

- Evacuation of 1 mile radius of a primarily residential area
- Shelter established by Red Cross
- Deployment of behavioral healthcare workforce

Questions Day 1

1. What information does the local emergency manager and/or public health official need from Red Cross and/or the behavioral health Region to activate a behavioral health response?
2. What is the Region's process for contacting behavioral health responders, especially those who are licensed?
3. How many Regional behavioral health responders (staff or volunteers) do you estimate can respond right now? What other agencies also have a behavioral response you will need to coordinate with?
4. How will you coordinate with the Red Cross?
5. The DHHS Division of Behavioral Health is reaching out to the Region to find out how they can be helpful. What does your Region need from DHHS at this point in the scenario?
6. DHHS: What are you doing right now? What processes are in place to put members of the Nebraska Behavioral Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) on standby if needed?

Module 2

Day 14

Clean-up is nearly complete. Air and water quality testing determines it is safe for residents to return to their homes and the local hospital re-opens. The Red Cross shelter closed on day 3 because most people found shelter with friends or family nearby. Community leadership set up a town hall meeting for representatives from the railroad to speak to the community about what they are doing to complete clean up. Residents still have concerns about air and water quality, despite test results. They have been told air and water will continue to be monitored for the next several months. Townspeople also have concerns about the potential for ongoing contamination from the debris pile remaining from the accident. Local leaders have asked for someone from behavioral health to address the group about common reactions during recovery and where to get help if needed. They plan to have an interpreter in the audience for Spanish speakers. Businesses in the town center are concerned about an economic hit they are taking because the local town celebration was cancelled and people from the area are skittish about coming to the town center to do business. Employees are also not showing up for work because they are concerned about lingering odors.

The behavioral health team has not been activated for this by emergency management – it is a request from local officials. The event is not eligible for a FEMA crisis counseling program grant. One of the Region’s board members is a resident of this community and is asking the Region Administrator what the Region is going to be doing to support the community over time.

Key Issues Day 14

- Lingering concerns about safety (air quality, water quality, soil quality)
- Anger and suspicion

REFERENCES

News articles and relevant case scenarios:

Train Derailment in Gothenburg, NE:

1. https://theindependent.com/news/state-and-regional/crime-and-courts/31-union-pacific-coal-cars-derail-near-gothenburg/article_af836567-5254-5695-8de6-1923a67a50ec.html

Hazardous Train Derailment in Ohio:

1. <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/cdc-investigators-studying-health-impacts-ohio-train-derailment/story?id=98273962>
2. <https://apnews.com/article/ohio-train-derailment-youth-sports-safety-5fdc425aba5d1b9d2f6a52e1da1ae767>
3. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/24/us/pennsylvania-school-lawsuit-norfolk-southern/index.html>

APPENDIX A: EXERCISE SCHEDULE

Time	Activity
10:00 am Central / 9:00 am Mountain	Welcome and Opening Remarks
10:10 Central / 9:10 Mountain	Scenario Presentation, Assign Breakout Groups
10:15 Central / 9:15 Mountain	Module 1 Small Group Discussion
10:45 Central / 9:45 Mountain	Module 1 Report Out
11:00 Central / 10:00 Mountain	BREAK
11:10 Central / 10:10 Mountain	Module 2 Small Group Discussion
11:30 Central / 10:30 Mountain	Module 2 Report Out
11:45 Central / 10:45 Mountain	Hotwash and Exercise Evaluation
12:00 noon Central / 11:00 am Mountain	Closing Comments and Adjourn

APPENDIX B: COMMON ACRONYMS

Acronym	Term
AAR	After Action Report
AAR/IP	After Action Report/Improvement Plan
COOP	Continuity of Operations Plan
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FOUO	For Official Use Only
ICS	Incident Command Structure
HCC	Health Care Coalition
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
JIC	Joint Information Center
JOC	Joint Operations Center
MAA	Mutual aid agreement
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NE DHHS	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
NEMA	Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NSP	Nebraska State Patrol
PET	Planning, Exercise and Training Region
PFA	Psychological First Aid
SitMan	Situation Manual
SME	Subject Matter Expert