

Synopsis

Exercises are a mainstay in the field of business continuity, disaster response, emergency response and incident management planning. Although many companies conduct exercises, and the organizers may be emergency response subject matter experts, they do not excel in the discipline of designing and conducting the actual exercise - which means they simply don't get the best results out of their effort. This thoughtful book starts with a "silly little question": Why are we doing this? What seems like a simple query is actually one of the keys to get the most out of every exercise you design. This text peels back the design process with the goal of creating the best experience possible. Whether you are developing a simple tabletop exercises or working on a full-scale extravaganza that resembles a Hollywood movie, this book will provide you with gems of wisdom that will make your next exercise sizzle. An internationally recognized expert in exercise design, Regina Phelps shares many of her secrets to ensure your exercise success.

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Customer Reviews

Running a disaster exercise can be a time consuming effort entailing extensive cost, in large measure in manpower hours. Given the large investment, it is certainly worthwhile to design and run the exercise to gain the biggest advantage possible. Regina Phelps has used her extensive practical experience exactly for that purpose --- to aid others, newcomers and "old hands" alike, in designing and running disaster plans exercises to reap the best results. As Phelps explains, the first step in disaster exercise planning is Orientation, or introducing the disaster plan to the staff.

Although Orientation takes only an hour or two, preparation takes much longer. It is not a matter of standing in front of a group and reading. When done properly the presentation includes audio-visuals and a simple didactic exercise. This can be followed later by Drill Exercises to ascertain that the basic material is learnt. It has been this reviewer's experience that staff is often not really aware of the details of disaster plans. This is the time to teach! (and to get employee feedback). Tabletop exercises are the next step. In its basic variety a situation is presented, and participants are asked to discuss the problem and present solutions. In more advanced scenarios added information can change a developing situation, and a "simulation team" can be used to take the place of the outside world to give additional input. In a Functional Exercise action stays at the tabletop level, but its increased sophistication entails more people involved, a more complicated situation, and more complicated developments. Equipment and other resources can be ordered, but nothing is actually fielded. A Full-scale Exercise is exactly as the name suggests.

For the growing number of individuals charged with ensuring effective business continuity, disaster recovery, and emergency management plans, conducting an ineffective exercise constitutes a lost opportunity and a potential major setback to your planning efforts. Well-executed exercises are simply the best and only viable approach. Any type of planner will welcome this hands-on guide that is clearly the bridge to getting the most out of emergency management exercises. Outlining the types of exercises used by organizations to test plans, the bulk of Emergency Management Exercises fleshes out how to run--end to end--the three most common types; Orientation, Tabletop and Functional. It's loaded with examples of processes, charts, and templates that can be easily tailored to an organization, and even includes great ideas for making exercises more engaging (such as using local A-V talent to create a mock radio broadcast). The book provides the planner with a jump-start based on proven practices. This is a solid guide resting on a well-thought-out foundation. Having been involved in the business continuity management field for twenty plus years, I know that one of the biggest challenges facing all types of institutions is to conduct exercises that make good use of the participants' time and ensure plans are current and ready to be executed. Sometimes the goal that drives the exercise and the objectives that support that goal have not been defined, which can lead to a lost focus or missed opportunity. Emergency Management Exercises not only addresses these common gaps, it provides the reasoning behind why they need to be closed.

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