

Continuity IQ

from  DSPN

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Fast Facts for Our Valued Friends and Clients

Dear Paul,

Here are some bullets and brain teasers about current events from your friends at DSPN. In this issue, we feature information about exercising your BC program. If you'd like to forward this message to your colleagues, just click the "Forward Email" link at the bottom of this page.

Fast Facts about Exercising Your BC Program

Did you know....

1. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) defines four types of exercises--drill, tabletop, functional, and full-scale.
2. According to NIMS, a drill is a coordinated, supervised activity usually used to test a single specific operation or function. Drills are commonly used to provide training on new equipment, develop or test new policies or procedures, or practice and maintain current skills. Most programs include evacuation drills, but few include shelter-in-place drills, an important exercise in light of recent disasters.
3. NIMS defines a tabletop exercise (TTX) as an activity that involves key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting. TTXs typically are aimed at facilitating understanding of concepts, identifying strengths and shortfalls, and achieving changes in attitude. Participants are encouraged to surface issues and develop decisions through slow-paced problem solving, rather than the rapid, spontaneous decision making that occurs under actual or simulated emergency conditions.
4. According to NIMS, a functional exercise (FE) simulates the reality of operations in a functional area by presenting complex and realistic problems that require rapid and effective responses by trained personnel in a highly stressful environment.
5. NIMS describes a full-scale exercise (FSE) as a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, or multi-organizational activity that tests many facets of preparedness. FSEs focus on implementing and analyzing the plans, policies, procedures, and cooperative agreements developed and honed in previous, smaller exercises. They are conducted in real-time, stressful environments that closely mirror real events.
6. An important consideration when designing an exercise is to choose an exercise type that compliments your scope, purpose, and objectives. Before selecting a complex exercise type, the coordinator should be certain that the program to be tested has sufficient maturity and that the funding organization

is prepared to support the project with adequate resources to ensure its success.

7. Full-scale exercises are most commonly conducted in the public sector, although some types of businesses, such as telecommunications companies and oil refineries conduct them regularly. Below are three examples of full-scale exercises.
8. A five-day disaster response exercise was staged in Toronto in August 2006. It was a large-scale search and rescue operation between Canada Task Force 3, Toronto Heavy Urban Search and Rescue(HUSAR) Team, and Provincial Emergency Response Teams. The exercise simulated a real-time disaster with emergency personnel on duty 24/7 over the course of the event, the first of its size and kind in Ontario.
9. The U.S. Department of Transportation in cooperation with Federal, State, local, and Canadian partners hosted PACIFIC PERIL 06 in May 2006 on the Oregon Coast. The three-day event consisted of a training day presenting earthquake and tsunami hazards and response plans, a full day Command Post Exercise, and a final table top review. The exercise simulated a catastrophic seismic event that triggered a massive tsunami that devastated Pacific coastal communities from British Columbia to northern California. The Government of Canada, including the Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver were also engaged in the exercise.
10. Telecoms sans Frontieres (TSF) recently participated in a full-scale exercise with AT&T in Ft. Lauderdale. TSF is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring emergency telecommunications services during catastrophes or conflicts. Relying on its regional bases in Nicaragua and in Thailand, TSF logistics workers and technical aid crews can intervene anywhere in the world less than 48 hours after any catastrophe or a conflict, and in a matter of minutes they can set up an operational center on site.

Brain Teasers

True or False:

1. Considering the most common mistakes made when designing an exercise, a designer should pay more attention to the basics.
2. When you write objectives for an exercise, you are identifying the things you will observe to determine if your purpose was achieved.
3. When designing a functional exercise, you will need to simulate messages-- phone calls, notes, or some other form of messages that are directed to participants in the exercise as if they came from senders who are not present in the room.
4. The best way to evaluate an exercise is to hold a critique session with participants as soon as the exercise is over.
5. Many coordinators do a good job of identifying gaps, but many are less effective at removing the identified gaps.

Check your answers here...

Answers to the above questions:

1. *True*. Here are some of the most common mistakes project managers make when designing an exercise: exercise scope too large, purpose not defined, too many objectives, objectives not measurable, messages not aligned with

objectives

2. *True.* Writing good objectives takes practice. You should try to make your objectives participant-focused, observable, and measurable,
3. *True.* These simulated messages are often called “injects” in the public sector.
4. *False.* (trick question!) Experienced designers use a variety of evaluation techniques to make sure they collect all of the useful information that is available. Besides critique sessions with participants, consider using problem logs, live observers, critiques from simulators, and delayed feedback report forms.
5. *True.* Here are some useful techniques to make sure identified gaps are removed: specifically define corrective actions; establish a timetable; assign responsibilities and accountabilities; monitor progress; retest at an appropriate interval.

Readiness Check

Hard-to-remember details:

1. Have you defined an exercise schedule for all components of your program? Do you invite key people well in advance and take appropriate steps to ensure they will attend?
2. Do you make use of a variety of exercise types and suit them to your scope, purpose, and objectives?
3. Have you thought carefully about all of the resources you will need to design and stage an exercise so you can package them all in a single request to your project sponsor?
4. Have you included a shelter-in-place drill in your exercise schedule?
5. Are you taking appropriate steps to ensure that identified gaps are corrected before the next exercise occurs?

New From DSPN

Check these out on our website:

1. DSPN's [2007 schedule of public workshops](#) is now available on our website.
2. Developing an exercise for your program? DSPN can help you [design and facilitate it](#).
3. Want to participate in a [mock disaster](#)? DSPN can organize one for your group or professional association.

Contributors to This Issue

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Comments and Contributions



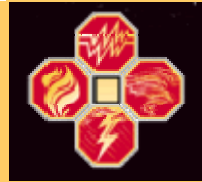
Tell us what you think...

Thanks to all of you who have sent us comments about this mailing.

In responding to recent incidents, did you discover an interesting detail that you would like to share? If so, send it along and we'll consider it for a future issue. If you want us to print a comment or submission about your company, be sure to give us permission when you write.

Paul

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