

Exercise Guide

Sustaining Preparedness During & After a Pandemic

Individual and community preparedness is fundamental to our National success. Providing individuals and communities with information and resources will facilitate actions to adapt to and withstand a national emergency like COVID-19.

Background

I-STEP developed this exercise guide to assist exercise planning teams jump start efforts to sustain stakeholder preparedness and resilience in the face of a pandemic. TSA suggests surface transportation operators consider a tabletop exercise like this as their resources allow.

Exercise Purpose & Scope

Use the text below as a basis for developing the exercise purpose and scope:

The purpose of this exercise is to identify and confirm roles and responsibilities to establish effective communication and information sharing practices internally within [organization] and externally among partnering agencies, as well as support on-scene operational coordination. It is a [one-day] exercise with [senior-level participants and operators].

Mission Areas

Depending on the goals of the exercise planning team, the team selects different mission areas for the focus of the exercise. This guide contains content for the following mission areas:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Mitigation
- Response
- Recovery

Capabilities

The following core capabilities below are suggestions for exercise areas:

- Operational Coordination
- Intelligence & Information Sharing
- Operational Communications
- Public Information & Warning
- Physical Protective Measures

Objectives

Select objectives based on the goals of the stakeholder(s) and the exercise planning team. The following objectives build on the core capabilities listed above:

1. Discuss existing protocols, procedures, and systems that govern the horizontal and vertical flow of information between all partners, including Federal, State, international, local agencies, private sector, and the public.
2. Identify the processes that [transportation operators], local authorities (state, local, territorial, and tribal), and other members of the community will

Exercise Guide

Sustaining Preparedness During & After a Pandemic

use to mitigate a persistent disruption caused by a national emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Discuss stakeholders' role, capability, and responsibility to support public health efforts.

3. Identify the roles and responsibilities of Federal agencies, including the coordination, communication, and decision-making mechanisms in mitigating disruptions caused by a global pandemic.

4. Discuss how flexible Incident Command Structure (ICS) coordination structures enable coordinated protective measures through well established, scalable, and flexible coordination structures. Identify proper equipment, training, policy, and doctrine among operational employees to effectively support wide spread public health or Medical Counter Measure (MCM) implementation.

5. Discuss the methods used and timelines to progress from operating disruptions caused by a pandemic to the resumption of operations.

Discussion Questions

The following are examples of discussion questions that can guide an exercise facilitator during the conduct of this exercise.

1. What communication plans are in place to ensure various internal departments and external partners effectively disseminate intelligence & information amongst themselves?

2. What procedures are in place in order to maintain order and safety at the various [locations]?

a. What additional procedures or protective measures could [stakeholder(s)] implement?

b. How will these measures be initiated and communicated to [various stakeholder(s)' departments] and external partners?

3. What policies are in place to determine information sharing processes with [transportation] operators, and to what degree (e.g., classified, SSI, Business Confidential, etc.)?

4. What Federal and State authorities are in place to support security of [stakeholder(s)]?

5. Are additional protective measures necessary in response to the report of potentially hazardous environment?

a. If so, what are some of the measures/capabilities, and how will [stakeholder(s)] communicate these measures to coordinate with external partners?

Exercise Guide

Sustaining Preparedness During & After a Pandemic

6. At this phase, how is/are [stakeholder(s)] disseminating public information?
7. How do the EOCs and/or MACC receive and process information from the field?
 - a. Are there tools or checklists in place to help obtain clear and concise information from the field?
8. Discuss plans/procedures to guide how system-wide protective measures should escalate based on evolving threat information.
 - a. Which [stakeholder(s) positions] are involved in determining security posture in response to the threat information?
9. What messages is/are [stakeholder(s)] disseminating to the public? To operating personnel? Other employees?
10. Who is responsible for the messaging?
11. What agencies will [stakeholder(s)] need to notify and pull into the response?
12. Discuss the decision making process, including plans, authorities, and triggers regarding system shutdown, shelter-in-place, and other appropriate actions to address public safety.
13. Discuss establishment of on-scene incident command structure.
 - a. Is a unified command structure set up?
 - b. What agencies would take lead authority?
 - c. Where is the Incident Command Post (ICP) located? Staging area?
14. What resources can your [organization/agency] provide to assist in response to this incident, in the real world, today? Consider the actual resources and manpower capabilities that are currently present, not just a list of resources maintained by agencies or anticipated to have in the future.
 - a. What resources does/do [stakeholder(s)] need from other [agencies/organizations]?
15. What plans, policies, and procedures address communication internally, externally, and with the public?
16. What procedures exist for increasing additional preventive measures throughout the [transportation system] as the threat elevates or diminishes?
17. What critical infrastructure considerations guide security and mitigation measures throughout the supply chain system? How are system components prioritized regarding protective measures?

Exercise Guide

Sustaining Preparedness During & After a Pandemic

18. What mitigation measures are in place within the [transportation system] to ensure public safety after the event has de-escalated?

a. What procedures exist for determining the safety and security of the system – post event?

19. What plans, policies, and procedures guide Federal, State, and local agencies and private sector roles and responsibilities?

20. What are the capabilities of partner [agencies/organizations] to sustain this situation for weeks or months?

21. What procedures exist to maximize use and potential of existing technology solutions?

22. Discuss the process for sharing information, on-going response priorities, and resources needs between the field and EOCs/MACC to support Incident Action Planning for the next operational period.

a. What is required to ensure coordination and documentation of multi-agency interdependencies and priorities?

b. How will the incident transition from operational (rescue/recovery) to investigative if a security incident arises?

c. Who is responsible for making the transition decision?

d. What roles do specific agencies play as the transition occurs?

23. Will the public information structure transition at this phase?

a. Discuss continued coordination of public information and warning messages.

24. As the pandemic continues to evolve,

a. Who is responsible for testing and evaluation of existing and emerging pandemic technologies for pandemic detection and mitigation efforts?

b. What risk assessment methodologies are being used?

c. What lessons learned from incidents around the world could inform [stakeholder's] internal program?

###