Tabletop Facilitator Guide

This guide will help you prepare for, hold and follow-up your organization’s Tabletop Exercise.

What is a Tabletop?
A Tabletop is a training exercise which lets an organization test its Disaster Staffing Plan and practice effective communication among the Disaster Response Roles.

Key Facilitator Goals
» Make sure discussions stay on track and all attendees participate.
» Promote open discussion by emphasizing that participants should feel free to make mistakes.
» Carefully observe breakout groups to identify strengths and weaknesses.
» Be flexible.

Materials to Review
» Ready to Respond: An Overview of the Disaster Staffing Toolkit video
» Tabletop Exercise Presentation
» Tabletop Evaluation Form
» After Action Report Guide

Before the Tabletop Exercise
Plan the logistics of the Tabletop Exercise including date, time, location and agenda and send invitations to the appropriate staff members and residents.

Customize the Tabletop Exercise Presentation
» The disaster scenario included in the presentation is a hurricane. You may want to choose a scenario more likely to occur in your area.
» Fill in the appropriate staff names in the Staffing Chart.
» Modify the agenda to fit your schedule.
Instruct all participants to
» Confirm their assigned Disaster Response Role.
» Watch the video Ready to Respond: An Overview of the Disaster Staffing Toolkit.
» Prepare Job Action Packets to bring to the Tabletop.

During the Tabletop
» Present the information in the Tabletop Exercise Presentation including your Staffing Chart, agenda, Incident Command System concepts and tools.
» Introduce the disaster scenario.
» At the end of each Operational Period in the scenario, instruct participants to break into groups based on their Disaster Response Roles. Ask the following questions, giving enough time for productive discussion:
  » What key decisions need to be made?
  » What are your tasks during the operational period?
  » How are you working and communicating with others?
» After the presentation concludes, lead an open discussion, asking the following questions:
  » What went well?
  » What didn’t go well?
  » What areas can be improved?
» Distribute Tabletop Evaluation Forms and encourage participants to be as detailed as possible in filling them out.
» Collect Tabletop Evaluation Forms and thank participants for attending.

After the Tabletop
» Write the After Action Report which provides an explanation of what occurred during the Tabletop Exercise. See the After Action Report Guide.
» Use the information gathered in the Tabletop Evaluation Forms and your personal observations to complete the After Action Report.