

Tabletop exercise template

By the Editorial Staff of SearchDisasterRecovery

Vital aspects of a tabletop exercise (TTX)

1. Needs

Assessing your organization's needs establishes the reason to do a tabletop exercise and defines which activities are critical to the process. You should include potential hazards, a comprehensive view of the current system and what improvements should be made. A sample questionnaire is shown below.

Yes/No	Activity to be addressed
	Is the emergency response plan up-to-date?
	Has the emergency response plan been tested in the past year?
	Are all policies and guidelines for response to an emergency spelled out clearly?
	Has a tabletop exercise been conducted within the past year?
	Have improvements been made and documented from previous exercises?
	Have emergency notification systems been tested in the past year?
	Are all appropriate personnel familiar with the emergency response plan?
	Are personnel familiar with their role and available resources in emergency operations?
	Do current personnel have the skills and knowledge necessary to respond?
	Have new resources been incorporated into the current plan?
	Have all potential resource limitations and problems been addressed?

2. Scope

The scope outlines the parameters of the tabletop exercise, and identifies the highest priorities and who should be involved in the process. Aspects of defining the scope include functions to be practiced or tested, the personnel to be involved in the exercise, how to match the degree of realism, likely hazard scenarios for the area and any potential agencies that will be involved.

3. Narrative

The narrative includes important details and conditions needed to test the scenario.

What happened?	
How did you find out?	
Was there advance warning?	
What time did it happen?	
Where did it happen?	
What is the scale of the event?	
What damage has already been reported?	
Are there any upcoming conditions to take into account?	

4. Communications

Communications include the method of communication and the substance of the communications. Tabletop exercises should establish the following:

Who is sending the message?	
How is the message being sent?	
What is the content of the message?	
Who is the message recipient?	

5. Expectations

Having clearly outlined expectations ensures that exercise participants know what is required from them, what the conditions will likely be in a real-life version of the scenario are and how well the actions must be done. Setting expectations also helps the organization evaluate whether the policies and procedures are effective and meet requirements.