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A Guide for the Conduct of Emergency Response Tabletop Activities

Prepared by



Emergency Management Issues
Special Interest Group

Prepared for

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has entered a new era, one that will lead to irrevocable change in the mission and roles of the Department and its principal assets and facilities. The continued success of the DOE system depends on the ability to formulate creative solutions to today's training problems.

The Training Resources and Data Exchange (TRADE) network, established and operated by the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE), is DOE's first systemwide network for sharing training resources.

Today, training and education are critical components of any organization's responsibilities, and the ability to provide best-of-class service in these areas is a distinct competitive advantage.

In 1986, the Emergency Management Issues Special Interest Group (EMI SIG) was established to provide technical assistance services and products to the DOE's Emergency Management System. The EMI SIG has been responsible for developing numerous products in an effort to provide common tools that might be used in the emergency management organizations.

Purpose

Training continues to play a critical role in emergency management personnel's readiness to respond in times of emergency. The mission of emergency response organizations requires a foundation of expertise that is built on diverse resources and is applicable to a broad spectrum of

competencies. The emergency management team must achieve its assigned DOE mission and objectives in a cost-effective, safe, secure, and environmentally sound manner.

The purpose of *A Guide for the Conduct of Emergency Response Tabletop Activities* is to provide DOE contractor organizations with information that can be used to better understand tabletop training programs. Tabletop training activities can be applied, individually or as a team, to any working group whose successful performance depends on the timely and appropriate interaction of all individuals involved in emergency response efforts.

Design

This training tool provides recommendations, techniques, and examples for ensuring that common background information related to the development of tabletop training activities is available within the DOE. This guide provides advice rather than a prescription.

To provide the developer with a basic understanding of the usefulness of tabletop activities, examples of tabletop activities from previous training programs are included. The examples provided in the text can also be used to support the developer's efforts in customizing the tabletop activity. However, in determining the specific training needs, the developer must consider the following key factors:

1. Job needs
2. Trainee's needs
3. Organizational needs
4. Differences in geographic locations

5. Availability of trained personnel
6. Availability of resources (medical, transportation, laboratories, etc.)
7. Population densities
8. Other demographic variations

This training tool is intended to be a useful aid when conducting tabletop training activities that focus on actions to take place during any of the four stages of an “event.”

Definition

Event: Any real-time occurrence or significant deviation from planned or expected behavior that could endanger or adversely affect people, property, or the environment.

The stages of an event include:

- a. Pre-Emergency Mitigation
- b. Pre-Emergency Preparedness
- c. Emergency Response Operations
- d. Post-Emergency Recovery

There are critical and specific actions that must take place by designated personnel during each of these stages to ensure the successful completion and desired outcome throughout the response process. This tool provides the guidance to develop the training materials needed to address these actions.

References are provided for further assistance. The list includes DOE guides, as well as business standards, which may prove useful during training design, development, implementation, and evaluation phases.

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WHAT IS TABLETOP TRAINING?

Tabletop training design has been used to develop training activities at various levels including professional, technical, skilled, and semi-skilled. Tabletop training program design is based on the following three premises:

1. *Expert workers* are better able to describe/define their job than anyone else.
2. Any job can be effectively and sufficiently described in terms of the *tasks* that *successful* workers perform in that job.
3. All tasks have direct implications for the *knowledge, skills, and attitudes* that workers must have in order to perform the tasks correctly.

Tabletop training is defined as:

1. A method of training delivery that focuses on both individual and team performance. It is an instructional process that uses rule-governed play to help trainees achieve objectives. It provides a specialized, cost-effective alternative to the traditional "lecture format."
2. An emergency preparedness training activity, which takes place in a classroom environment or emergency response facility, during which emergency response personnel are presented with simulated events, and the participants work through the response actions. Tabletop training activities may use a discussion format to provide training, development, and team building, as differentiated from an exercise in which the players actually respond to the simulated event to demonstrate their time line.

The objective of tabletop training programs is to provide cost-effective training activities with minimum interference to program operations while meeting the training needs of the respective facilities. This guide is intended to provide an alternative to formal training.

Goals of Tabletop Training

Goals of tabletop training include relevant and credible activities that will practice the trainees’:

1. Readiness to meet the challenges of any emergency or disaster
2. Response including activities that ensure the health and safety of personnel, the facility, and the public
3. Communication abilities that incorporate all aspects needed to provide an adequate flow of information and communication.

Issues to consider when identifying the training goals and objectives of a tabletop activity are:

- Regulatory compliance
 - Audit requirements
 - Technical safety appraisals
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspections
 - Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) findings or reports
-

Major Characteristics of Tabletop Training

Tabletop training activities:

1. Provide training that simulates the working environment, conditions , and/or equipment used on the job
 2. Increase the value of the training because the training activity simulates the actual job and environment
 3. Provide different types of learning
 4. Maximize activities in which trainees strive to attain a goal with n prescribed rules
 5. Permit variation in pace.
-

Major Advantages of Tabletop Training

Tabletop training activities, when used properly, provide an efficient and cost-effective method of content analysis and program design. Tabletop activities are inexpensive in comparison with some other training methods because the process is completed in a few days. Tabletops are great training tools, they also allow Program Management staff to assess, validate, and verify current plans and procedures.

An additional benefit of the tabletop development process is the partnership that forms between the training department and the operating organization designing the content because the development team primarily comprises people from both areas. Tabletop training:

1. Provides the opportunity to replicate working conditions and actions without concern for safety and hazards to personnel, facility, equipment,

and the public

2. Provides varying amounts of realism, depending on the activity
3. Allows trainees to experience and practice job-related skills and receive feedback on performance
4. Allows trainees to practice behaviors recently acquired or to experiment with behaviors that have the potential to be useful
5. Allows trainees to observe the effects of their behavior on others and emphasizes that good human relations requires skill
6. Allows for more valid methods of assessing trainee performance, depending on the accuracy of the activity
7. Allows for manageable development lead time, which decreases the development effort
8. Provides flexible and cost-effective training by reducing the cost of development, delivery, and documentation
9. Allows for easy modification of focus and complexity
10. Provides training that is less stressful than exercises
11. Allows enhanced “learning by doing”
12. Allows for recognition of others’ roles

13. Provides documented results
 14. Allows interactive communication between emergency management staff in a nonthreatening environment
 15. Allows for crossover knowledge to support daily work efforts that are closely related to activities performed during emergency situations
 16. Allows for flexibility and timeliness of training staff in responding to training needs.
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**Major Disadvantages of
Tabletop Training**

The major disadvantages of tabletop training activities are that they:

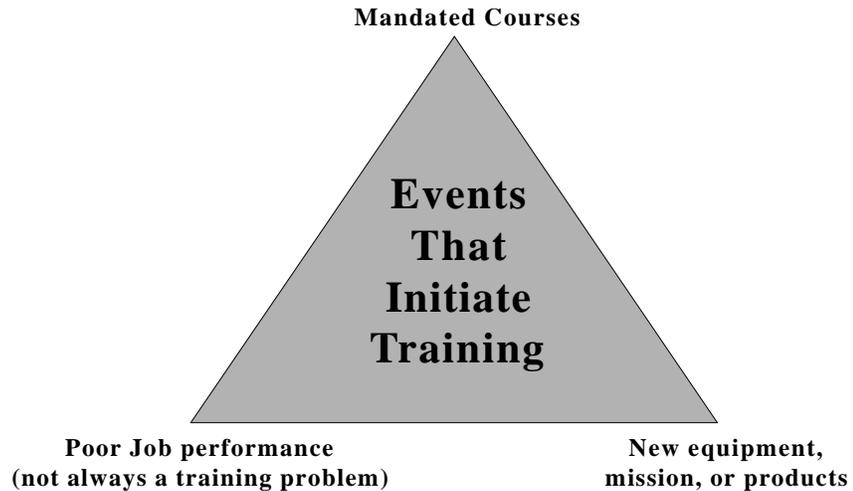
1. Require briefing, discussion, and debriefing skills by the instructor and the facilitator
 2. Cannot possibly simulate all work or job circumstances, situations, or stimuli
 3. Involve a significant amount of self-directed activity, which some trainees are not able to perform appropriately
 4. May not be taken seriously by some trainees.
-

**Uses of Tabletop
Training**

Individuals responsible for training emergency management personnel need to focus on identifying and clarifying training needs. The training staff needs to understand the complete operation of their respective facilities. This will enable training personnel to ensure that programs align with contractor and

DOE missions and meet training needs.

Tabletop training activities are currently being presented in emergency response organizations:



- As emergency preparedness training activities
- In the classroom or emergency response facility environment focusing on specific elements of the emergency response organization
- As structured simulated events with walk-through response actions
- In discussion format
- In contrast to exercises where players actually respond.

The most frequent use of tabletop training activities for emergency management personnel has been in the development of tabletop drills and exercises. Tabletop training activities are also useful in developing interaction with team members; identifying roles and responsibilities; and providing initial or continuing training due to changes to regulations, procedures, the emergency response organization, and equipment.

Events That Initiate Training

Poor job performance is another event that may initiate training development. It is significant to note that training may not always be the solution for such a problem. If the poor performance is caused by lack of skills, then it must be determined if training is needed. If the poor performance is the result of poor motivation or the wrong environmental conditions, training will not resolve the problem!

WHO IS INVOLVED?

During the tabletop training activity, the roles include the following:

1. **Coordinator** - makes the training and logistical arrangements
2. **Team members** who respond in their designated roles as:
 - a. **Emergency response personnel** who are recognized as **subject-matter experts** (SMEs) in their speciality areas (which may include an **immediate supervisor** and/or a **safety analyst**)
 - b. **Recorder** - records the tabletop activities
 - c. **Observer** (optional)
3. **Facilitator(s)** - orchestrates the tabletop training activity.

Emergency responders (SMEs, a supervisor, a safety analyst, etc.) are selected for training as part of a tabletop activity team. A facilitator guides the emergency response individuals through the tabletop activity.

Since the emergency response team consists of people with expertise in their job, team members do not need advance preparation. Generally, team members find working on the team to be both professionally stimulating and rewarding.

It must be stressed, however, that some emergency response positions may not have any "experts." This is especially true when a new position is created, an existing position is suddenly vacated, or at facilities that are in the early stages of operation. In these cases, the facility may decide to use a method other than tabletop training design.

Accurate work during the tabletop training activity is important because these tasks will form the basis for determining how well the emergency response staff works together as a team. It is imperative that the team work together to accomplish the goals and objectives of the tabletop training activity. If the emergency response team performs work that is faulty during a tabletop training activity, the probability of unacceptable responses during an actual emergency is increased.

Roles and Responsibilities				
Coordinator	Recorder	Team Members	Observer(s) (optional)	Facilitator
↔ Secures approval to conduct the tabletop.	↔ Records the tabletop activities.	↔ Practice response actions.	↔ Provides input during the discussion and critique, as directed.	↔ Runs the tabletop activity.
↔ Sets date and time	↔ Assess tabletop play.	↔ Observe other players.		↔ Controls event time.
↔ Names the facilitator.	↔ Records the results of the tabletop critique.	↔ Participate in discussion of response actions.		↔ Facilitates discussion among players.

Coordinator's Role

In making pre-session arrangements, the role of the coordinator is to:

- Secure management approval
- Establish dates for the tabletop activity
- Identify an appropriate facilitator and dates
- Gather information for review by facilitator.

The coordinator may or may not act as the facilitator of the tabletop training activity.

Recorder's Role

The role of the recorder is to:

- Record goals and objectives of the tabletop activity accurately and legibly
 - Repeat the goals and objectives to ensure consensus before beginning the tabletop activity
 - Support the coordinator and the facilitator through documentation, as needed.
-

Team Member's Role

To be successful, the individuals participating in the tabletop training activity must operate as a team. Team members must be aware of their individual roles and responsibilities while responding to an emergency. Observers are often welcome, but must not participate as team members.

The team members should be encouraged to do the following:

- Offer content contributions freely
 - Share ideas with the team
 - Stay focused on the actions and not the individual
 - Limit value judgments about the actions of others
-

- Confine themselves to the pre-established restrictions of the table to p activity
 - Maintain documentation in accordance with procedures for the position being trained
 - Respond using organization's implementation procedures
 - Verbalize activities
 - Communicate performance actions that should be taken
 - Adhere to all safety policies and procedures.
-

**Team Member
Qualifications**

Using input from management, team members should be selected based on the following qualifications specific to the role that is anticipated for each team member. The SMEs, supervisor, and safety analyst are also part of the team. The same team members should participate throughout the entire process.

Interpersonal Skills

In addition to the technical competence required of the SMEs, supervisor, safety analyst trainees, and the training staff, all team members should possess or develop the following interpersonal skills.

Interpersonal Skills Required of All Team Members

- ⇒ The ability and willingness to clearly describe the knowledge and skills required to perform their jobs
- ⇒ The skill of listening respectfully to the views of others and participating effectively in group discussions without dominating or being dominated
- ⇒ A disposition not to overreact to criticism or to having their contributions analyzed or reorganized
- ⇒ The disposition to believe in the process and want to participate in it (this excludes people who are “sent” without explanation or simply assigned by their supervisor to “fill a seat” on the team)
- ⇒ The ability to be open-minded and free from biases related to training methods, training times, and trainee qualifications

SME Qualifications

Expert job incumbents, that is individuals who are qualified and competent in their day-to-day job positions, are often assigned to emergency response organization positions that are related to their respective specialty areas . These individuals are in the best position to explain what they do and to provide expert assistance and advice during an emergency, as needed. They must be technically competent and perceived as role models for proper job performance. They must be highly skilled and knowledgeable of the tasks required to perform the job and aware of current developments such as new procedures, new equipment, and facility and industry lessons learned. In the circumstances where the job requirements are changing, the position is still under development, or no expert worker is yet functioning, system engineers and/or procedure writers may be used in lieu of SMEs.

SME Qualifications

- ⇨ Full-time employee in a job similar to the assigned emergency response position
- ⇨ Perceived as the “role model” for proper job performance
- ⇨ Highly skilled and knowledgeable of the job
- ⇨ Aware of new procedures, equipment, and “lessons learned”

Supervisor Qualifications

A supervisor may directly supervise emergency response team members on a daily basis. Knowing what is considered desirable worker performance, a supervisor with recent practitioner-level experience in the emergency response position can provide useful insights and continuity of the process to an individual who has recently been assigned. The caution is to make sure the supervisor has a good working relationship with the job incumbents so the SMEs on the team will not feel hindered or threatened when describing their jobs. Any supervisor selected to participate on the emergency response team must be an individual who will listen to and consider the contributions of **all** team members even though the supervisor may disagree on some discussion points. The entire team must be able to come to consensus without any one opinion bearing more weight than that of the other team members.

Supervisor Qualifications

- ⇨ May directly supervise an emergency response team member
- ⇨ Recent practitioner-level experience in an emergency response position
- ⇨ Has good working relationship with emergency response personnel

Evaluator's Role

Evaluators include all team members, the facilitator, the coordinator, and the observers. The evaluator's role is to:

- Observe and assess performance of the emergency response team
 - Determine if the tabletop activity objectives were met
 - Provide feedback to the participating emergency response team in the form of debriefings, critiques, and reports
-

Facilitator's Role

Facilitators for emergency response tabletop activities should be experienced emergency managers or trainers. The facilitator's responsibilities are to:

- Be knowledgeable of the subject area
- Stay focused on the group process
- Encourage each team member to contribute
- Listen actively to all contributions
- Control participants who try to dominate
- Readily accept contributions to ensure accuracy and clarity
- Provide frequent positive reinforcement
- Repress personal biases and opinions
- Probe and encourage with questions
- Set and maintain an enthusiastic climate

Many people can assume the role of coordinator, but few have all the necessary qualities to perform as the facilitator. With input from management, the coordinator should choose the facilitator. The choice should be carefully made, based on the qualities required of a facilitator.

Facilitator Qualities

During an emergency response tabletop activity, the facilitator, acting as a process expert in both emergency response and training, will facilitate the sessions without providing technical input. Successful facilitation of emergency response tabletop activities hinges on four factors: (1) interpersonal skills, (2) expertise in content analysis and design process, (3) possession of special skills associated with facilitating the design effort of the training program, and (4) expertise and experience in emergency management or training. At a minimum, the facilitator should be very familiar with emergency management plans and procedures for the facility/process where training is scheduled. Preferably, the facilitator should be qualified to conduct tabletop activities through training and practical experience.

The following tables can serve as checklists to identify the special skills the facilitator should possess or develop.

Special Skills of Tabletop Activity Facilitators

- ⇨ Expertise and knowledge in the subject area being trained: emergency management, fire protection, security, crisis communication, etc.
- ⇨ Expertise in task and document analysis process
- ⇨ Expertise in training program content design process
- ⇨ Expertise in the tabletop design method
- ⇨ Skill in questioning techniques
- ⇨ Ability to act as a process expert who leads and controls the process but allows team members to act as content experts who make content judgments and decisions
- ⇨ Skill in small group dynamics
- ⇨ Skill in obtaining small group consensus
- ⇨ Ability to establish and maintain the team's pace, balance, and participation
- ⇨ Ability to differentiate procedural disconnects from problems with training materials

Interpersonal Skills of Facilitator

- ⇨ A sensitivity to others
- ⇨ The ability to establish and maintain enthusiasm
- ⇨ Patience
- ⇨ The ability to display and maintain a positive image
- ⇨ A high degree of sensitivity to both verbal and nonverbal communication
- ⇨ Excellent memory
- ⇨ The ability to show empathy
- ⇨ A sense of humor
- ⇨ The ability to make decisions
- ⇨ Excellent listening skills
- ⇨ The ability to display warmth and establish rapport quickly with team members
- ⇨ The ability to motivate, encourage, and focus team members

Facilitation Skills of Facilitator

- ⇨ Expertise in the systematic approach to training
- ⇨ Experience using the training design process built into this process
- ⇨ Skill in questioning techniques
- ⇨ The ability to act as a process expert who leads and controls the process but allows team members to act as content experts who make content judgments and decisions

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**PREPARING TO
CONDUCT
TABLETOP
ACTIVITIES**

Identify, select, and train facilitators or coordinators.

**Coordinator Activities
Before the Tabletop
Training**

The coordinator is responsible for the initial activities before conducting tabletop activities (see the job aids in the Appendices). The coordinator will:

- Create awareness of the scheduled event
- Review and incorporate any lessons learned from previous exercises, drills, etc., pertinent to the tabletop activity about to be conducted
- Convince participants it is worth their time
- Encourage participants to prepare in advance by reviewing their responsibilities
- Familiarize participants with tabletop elements
- Ensure facilities and resources are available to support the tabletop training activity: physical facilities and equipment and technical reference materials
 - Physical facilities and equipment include classroom facilities, laboratory and workshop facilities, simulators, audiovisual aids and equipment, tools, and/or office space and furnishings, as needed
 - Technical reference materials should be applicable to facility systems and equipment and should be current with facility modifications

Needed Tools to Practice Response

The coordinator ensures the availability of needed resources. Some needed tools may include:

- Emergency plans and implementing procedures
 - Emergency Operations Center (EOC) position checklists
 - Rosters or callout lists
 - Reference guidebooks
 - Specialized computer/communications equipment
-

Possible Levels of Participant Involvement

The coordinator is responsible for informing the appropriate individuals of tabletop training, depending on the level of involvement (level of staffing) or the depth of training to be accomplished. Some possible levels of involvement are:

- Fully staffed in designated emergency response facilities (ERFs)
 - Single individual or skeleton team in all ERFs
 - Less than total set of ERFs fully staffed
 - Less than total set of ERFs staffed with individual or skeleton team
 - Top level staff from each participating organization assembled in a large theater or conference room
 - Individual or skeleton team from each organization in conference room setting
 - Emergency response facility staffed with single representative from all other ERFs and organizations
-

What Determines the Setting and Participants?

Several factors must be considered when determining where the tabletop activity should be conducted and who should participate. Points to consider about the structure and the purpose of the tabletop are included in the following list:

- Walk-through versus exercise format
 - Performance test, demonstration, or annual exercise
 - Training
 - Qualifying and certifying
 - Testing new/modified equipment or facilities
 - Testing or verification and validation of plans or procedures
 - Testing onsite or offsite interfacing Emergency Response Organization (ERO)
 - Adding a new facility to the site plan
 - Maintaining ERO skills and proficiency
 - Identifying deficiencies before updates of plans and procedures
-

The Art of Moderating

The facilitator must possess the art of moderating. The art of moderating requires that the facilitator maintain control of the following points:

- Command of the tabletop events
 - Sustaining action: maintaining the rate and direction of information flow.
 - Degree of discussion and free play: observing the level of problem solving, training, and evaluation.
 - Watching for signs of frustration: knowing when to suspend action.
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CONDUCTING TABLETOP ACTIVITY

The facilitator is responsible for conducting the tabletop activity. This guide has been developed to provide useful tips for the facilitator. To aid the facilitator, this section discusses guidelines for conducting and setting up a tabletop activity.

To provide how-to information, examples from an actual tabletop training activity are included in the Facilitator's Checklist.

Guidelines for Tabletop Operations

Some guidelines for the facilitator to consider while conducting a tabletop training activity are:

- Everyone should participate.
 - Share ideas freely with the group.
 - “Piggyback” ideas of others.
 - Focus on offering constructive suggestions rather than negative comments.
 - Task statements should be accepted as soon as consensus is reached on them.
 - Members may use references after brainstorming to ensure that no task has been omitted.
 - All tasks statements should begin with an action verb and should reflect observable performances.
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Setting up a Tabletop Activity

In setting up the tabletop, the facilitator should consider the following:

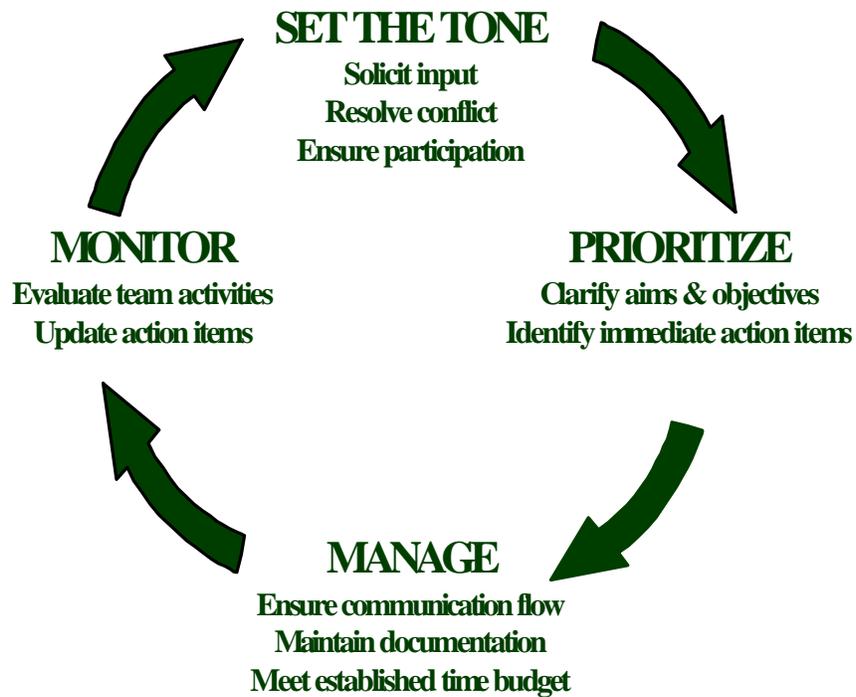
- Define goals, scope, and training objectives.
 - Identify participants and training cadre.
 - Select scenario materials.
 - Determine logistical and administrative needs.
-

**Facilitator
Coordination Cycle**

The facilitator is ultimately responsible for how well the tabletop activity progresses. The following illustration depicts the Facilitator Coordination Cycle. The facilitator should:

- Set the tone
 - Solicit input
 - Resolve conflict
 - Ensure participation
 - Prioritize
 - Clarify aims and objectives
 - Identify immediate action items
 - Manage
 - Ensure communication flow
 - Maintain documentation
 - Meet established time budget
 - Monitor
 - Assess team activities
 - Update action items
-

Facilitator Coordination Cycle



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Facilitator's Checklist

A checklist has been included in the Appendices to assist the facilitator with the tabletop activity process. The checklist is divided into time periods. **The checklist is not meant to be all inclusive** . The facilitator should review it and edit, shorten, or lengthen as needed. Tabletop activities should not exceed one to two hours; if they do, narrow the focus on a smaller piece of the overall picture.

ASSESSING TABLETOP ACTIVITIES

By design, the tabletop training activity provides an opportunity for using a systematic approach to assess the effectiveness and adequacy of team training. It is assumed that each facility will have already developed emergency response position-specific procedures (perhaps from a validated task list) and that emergency response position tasks requiring formal training will have been identified.

Using emergency response procedures as a baseline, the participants of the tabletop activity can examine the usefulness of the tabletop activity. The process is based on analyzing the subject content of the tabletop activity while simultaneously assessing the performance of individual emergency response team members, the interaction of each emergency response team, and the emergency response organization as a whole. This process requires much less time than traditional training delivery and evaluation methods, saving hundreds of hours, with valid results.

The development of effective training materials depends on the development of learning objectives that adhere to a strict set of criteria. It is important that objectives be established and approved early because they form the foundation for the development of test items, performance measures, and all other training materials. Because objectives serve as the design basis of performance-based training programs, they should clearly describe the trainee's desired performance to avoid misinterpretation.

Some of the benefits of using learning objectives are:

- Standards of performance are presented in a trainee-accessible way
 - Criteria for assessment are defined
 - Learning requirements are clarified and explicit
 - Content, methods, media, and resources are derived and related to objectives
 - Focus is provided for the instructor and the trainee
-

Definition of Learning Objective

A learning objective is defined as “a statement that specifies measurable behavior that a trainee should exhibit after instruction.” Properly prepared learning objectives consist of the following parts:

- A statement of behavior (action) the trainee must exhibit
 - The conditions under which the action will take place
 - The standards of satisfactory performance
-

Parts of Learning Objectives

All effective learning objectives have certain characteristics. Objectives should always be constructed to include these characteristics:

- *Attainable:* Is the objective possible to achieve by the average trainee?
 - *Specific:* Is the wording concise? Has unnecessary and confusing verbiage been removed?
 - *Clear:* Will everyone interpret the objective in the same way?
 - *Measurable:* Can this behavior be measured? How? With what kind of gauge?
-

Effective learning objectives can be stated in a variety of formats. The most common format combines condition, action, and standard statements. This combination explicitly defines the condition under which the performance occurs, what knowledge or skill is exhibited, and the standards of acceptable performance.

The training setting must be considered in the objectives. The selected setting should be consistent with the task, but balanced against available resources and facility constraints.

Further guidance on writing learning objectives to modify existing programs or to develop new programs is contained in the Department of Energy (DOE) *Guide to Good Practices for Developing Learning Objectives*. DOE contractors should not feel obligated to adopt all parts of this guide. Rather, they can use the information to develop programs that apply to their facility. This guide can be used as an aid by course designers, developers, instructors, and training managers to develop learning objectives that result in effective training programs.

Assessing Learning Objectives

Training courses or programs should be reviewed on a continuing basis. Learning objectives provide a basis for these program assessments. Quality of performance can be assessed for individual trainees or across classes or programs.

Learning objectives should be revised if the results of this assessment, or trainee input or performance failures, indicate the objectives are inadequate. Learning objectives should also be reviewed and revised accordingly when procedure changes, facility modifications, or facility/industry events indicate a need to revise training. Other factors may cause the trainee to have performance problems. For example, the objective may be appropriate, but the sequencing is not, or the

instruction is not aligned with the objective.

As with the original learning objectives for a course, revised objectives must be reviewed and approved for use. Attention should be given to rewritten objectives to ensure they meet the desired intent of the revision. When evaluating the tabletop activity, the following considerations relative to learning objectives should be emphasized:

- Learning objectives are used to identify training content and satisfactory performance
 - Learning observable and measurable actions
 - Learning objectives are compatible with expected entry level skills and knowledge of trainees
 - Learning objectives are sequenced to assist trainees in making transitions from one skill level to another
 - Learning activities are derived from the learning objectives
 - Proposed changes to learning objectives are reviewed and approved by appropriate facility and training personnel
 - Changes to objectives are tracked to demonstrate that training materials are current with facility operating procedures, etc.
-

Factors that Impact Quality

The quality of tabletop activities is directly linked to two critical factors: (a) assembling the team participants and (b) using a Facilitator. A Facilitator is required to maximize the effectiveness of the tabletop activity. General conventions related to tabletop activities are:

- a. The Coordinator and the Facilitator are qualified through training and practical experience
 - b. Team members are subject matter experts (SMEs)
 - c. Supervisors that are on the team are SMEs as well
 - d. Team members participate throughout the entire tabletop
-

Questions to Ask: Lessons Learned

Lessons learned should be documented. During the critique phase of the training activity, group discussion should identify both the positive outcomes and the areas for improvement. Training, especially team training, provides an opportunity to identify process disconnects, missing lines of communications, and duplications of effort. Further, it helps to identify the overscheduling or the underutilization of individual team members.

Some questions to consider when identifying lessons learned are:

- 1. Was the goal of the training met?
- 2. Were the objectives of the tabletop activity met?
- 3. Did the tabletop activity involve the appropriate individuals to accomplish the purpose of the training?
- 4. Were special grouping or pairing arrangements needed?

5. Did the tabletop activity provide an opportunity for training of the roles of each individual involved in the activity?
6. Was the location of tabletop training activity appropriate?
7. Were resources available: facilities, equipment, reference materials?
8. Were the training logistics adequately arranged?
 - a. Date, time of training, location
 - b. Room arrangement with adequate tables, chairs, breakout rooms, etc.
 - c. Training equipment (overhead projector, VCR/monitor, boards, makers, etc.)
 - d. Training aids (handouts, reference material, job-related equipment, etc.)
 - e. Objectives clearly defined
 - f. Appropriate method of delivering and performing activities (scenarios, case study, group discussion, etc.)
9. Were the “key points” relayed to the trainees during the debriefing after the tabletop training activity?
10. Did the tabletop training materials support the training activity?
11. Were instructions and directions provided to the trainees? Were they clear and appropriate?

All team members should participate in the discussion and, if provided, complete the critique sheet for the tabletop activity. As a minimum, the recorder should capture the main points of the lessons learned discussion and make them available to the coordinator for incorporation into the Lessons Learned Report (see the Coordinator’s Checklist).

SUMMARY

The purpose of *A Guide for the Conduct of Emergency Response Tabletop Activities* is to provide DOE contractor organizations with information that can be used to better understand tabletop training programs. Tabletop training activities can be applied, individually or as a team, to any working group whose successful performance depends the timely and appropriate interaction of all individuals involved in emergency response efforts.

This guide has been developed especially to assist the facilitator with tabletop training activities. The facilitator of such training wants to be sure the training is effective. One way to achieve effectiveness is to apply the four-step method of instructing to any training situation. The four-step method is actually a training pattern to follow that combines many of the basic principles of learning and builds a bridge for the learner from known skills to new skills.

The four-step method provides a tested and well-tried pattern for planning and conducting skills training. The Facilitator’s Checklist provides a clear example of the four-step method of instructing.

1. **The Preparation Step**

Preparation includes all of the planning tasks that the facilitator must complete before the tabletop activity begins. For the Facilitator, reviewing this entire guide could be considered

preparation. Further explanation is provided in the “Preparing to

Conduct Tabletop Activities” section, the Coordinator’s Checklist, and the Facilitator’s Checklist.

2. **The Presentation Step**

Presentation is covered in the “Conducting the Tabletop Activity” section of this guide. The Facilitator’s Checklist further provides examples of the facilitator’s presentation of tabletop activity information to the trainees.

3. **The Application Step**

During this step, the trainees actually apply or put into practice what has been presented; they “learn by doing.”

To provide instruction to the facilitator regarding the application of specific steps in the conducting of a tabletop activity, examples from actual tabletop activities have been included. Additionally, the facilitator is given tips for encouraging the trainees to apply the information presented.

4. **The Assessment Step**

Did the team/trainees learn? The primary purpose of assessment is NOT to provide a means of rating or grading performance. The primary purpose should be to provide information to the team/trainee about areas in which performance needs improvement and to provide information to the trainer about areas in which training needs improvement.

The “Assessing Tabletop Activities” section thoroughly covers this step. Additionally, the Facilitator’s Checklist reviews the critique process of the tabletop activity and provides an example application of the assessment step.