

**EMERGENCY EXERCISE (EMEX)00-1  
Pantex Plant - Amarillo, Texas  
March 2000  
"Dust Devil"**

**SECTION VII  
NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF  
SCENARIO EVENTS**

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**Narrative Summary of Scenario Events**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The scenario involves a tornado strike at Pantex during what begins as a routine work day. The tornado, which is later determined to be a strong F3, causes a significant number of casualties among plant employees. Winds, estimated around 200 mph, resulted in substantial damage to selected non-hardened structures, and a portion of the plant’s communication, utility, and security infrastructure.

This exercise will specifically focus on:

- destruction of the waste accumulation Bldg. XXXX where low level rad waste is stored
- low level rad waste from Bldg. XXXX blown on site and off site
- destruction of Bldg. XXXX and loss of steam to plant
- natural gas fire at Bldg. XXXX
- hazardous chemical spill at Bldg. XXXX
- complete loss of power in Bldg. XXXX
- employees trapped in the basement of Bldg. XXXX
- multiple injuries /fatalities in Bldgs. XXXX and XXXX
- impact to other plant operations
- plant population seeking shelter

**2. NARRATIVE SUMMARY**

March 15, 2000 is a typical early spring day in the Texas panhandle. The normal complement of workers are at the Pantex Plant.

Operations at the plant begin that morning with the potential for a severe weather warning for later in the day based on a National Weather Service (NWS), Texas and Oklahoma Thunderstorm Outlook bulletin issued at 0730.

At 1100, thunderstorms begin building near Hereford heading NNE at 25 mph. The NWS issues a Tornado Watch for south-central and the central Panhandle region from 1100 until 1700.

At 1120, the NWS issues a Severe Thunderstorm Warning for eastern Deaf Smith, and western Randall counties until 1220, as NWS radar signatures indicate that one of the thunderstorms have become severe. The NWS immediately contacts the Amarillo/Potter/Randall Emergency Management and recommends that the Weather Watch be activated.

At 1125, the thunderstorm continues to strengthen as it moves to the NE, and has slowed to 20 mph.

At 1130, the Amarillo/Potter/Randall Emergency Management activates Weather Watch. Spotters are moved into the field (*simulated*) and begin to track the storm.

At 1200 static levels at Pantex indicate two sensors are reading over 4,000 Volts Per Meter. The PSS issues Static Warnings.

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At 1210, NWS detects a possible tornado on radar moving NE at an estimated speed of 20 mph and issues a Tornado Warning for Northern Randall and Southern Potter Counties until 1245. At 1217, a spotter confirms that a small tornado is on the ground 5 miles west of Lake Tanglewood. Storm Spotters, NWS, and the Amarillo/Potter/Randall Emergency Management continue to track the storm as it approaches the city of Amarillo.

At 1215, the Amarillo/Potter/Randall Emergency Management activates the Amarillo EOC for Emergency Operations.

At 1220, the tornado continues towards the southwest sections of Amarillo, but lifts just before entering the city. The storm continues on its NE track at 20 mph.

At 1230, the Control Tower reports a funnel cloud looming above the Amarillo International Airport terminal building. The funnel does not drop down, and no damage is reported at the facility. The funnel continues to move to the NE around 20 mph.

At 1235, the funnel continues on a track towards Pantex, the PSS orders all employees at Pantex to seek refuge within the nearest secure (hallway, bathroom, etc) area. The NWS issues a Tornado Warning for Western Carson County until 1320. The Sheriff's office in Carson County is notified by the NWS.

At 1245, the funnel crosses Hwy 60 and St. Francis. The storm continues on a NE track towards the Pantex Plant, but has slowed to 15 mph. Storm spotters report very strong winds with the storm and reports the funnel beginning to make its way towards the ground.

At 1313, the tornado touches down just west of the Pantex Plant. Spotters report the tornado to be approximately ½ to ¾ of a mile wide. At 1315, the tornado reaches the built-up area of the plant, where a number of temporary and unhardened structures succumb to its tremendous force.

At 1325, the tornado exits the NE corner of the plant, but continues to move northeast across western Carson County. The NWS expands the Tornado Warning until 1350 to include all of Carson County, and again notifies the Carson County Sheriff Office.

At 1330, spotters report the tornado appears to be weakening.

At 1333, spotters report the tornado has dissipated. NWS Doppler Radar also indicate that the storm rotation has weakened considerably. The tornado warning issued for Carson County is allowed to expire.

At approximately 1335, the “All Clear!” is given to plant personnel. Simultaneously, a declaration of an “Operational Emergency” is issued by the PSS concurrent with full activation of the ERO. This action is taken in response to the anticipated casualties, damage, and hazards present at the plant.

At 1500 the scenario terminates for the City of Amarillo EOC.

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At 1530, the scenario and exercise “free-play” terminate.

**3. RESPONSE EXPECTATIONS**

As severe weather threatens the Texas panhandle, Pantex executes a systematic response to the potential threat:

- nuclear operations cease
- building managers and Facilities take precautionary actions
- the plant population is warned and are ultimately directed to seek shelter
- the Operations Center duty staff is augmented with additional EMD support
- the “all clear” is sounded as the ERO is activated

The ERO responds to their duty station avoiding hazards and debris encountered en route. Gradually, reports of damage and casualties begin to filter in along with the reported movement of some plant employees who want to get to their vehicles and go home to check on members of their families.

As information continues to arrive within the EOC, the ERO becomes focused on the tremendous emergency response which is required to deal with the casualties, the fire, the loss of essential utilities, the physical destruction of security fencing and intrusion detection systems, and the possible loss or compromise of classified material.

An “Operational Emergency” is declared. Upon discovery of hazardous materials potentially with offsite consequences, categorization of a “General Emergency” may be made. Coordination of mutual aid requests (approval or reluctant denial based on a paucity of assets) will be an underlying theme to the emergency response decision making process until assets can be requisitioned through Disaster District 5-B.

Almost immediately, the Emergency Manager and Incident Commander direct the Recovery Manager to assess the damage ramifications and begin the initial restoration of essential services and operations. The return to normal operations remains initially beyond the immediate focus.

Field response units, such as Security, Fire Department, Hazardous Materials Response Team, and Facilities, respond under the Incident Command System (ICS) and are directed by the Incident Commander. Simultaneously, the Emergency Manager and his staff begin essential coordination with higher headquarters, local, and state officials. Public information releases are coordinated with the Emergency Press Center located in the Bldg. XXXX (EOC) and the JIC which is assembled in Bldg. XXXX.