



NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT Tabletop Exercise Toolkit

**Facilitator Guide
Power Outage, Response Phase**

Version 1.0





POWER OUTAGE RESPONSE SCENARIO

Congratulations, you have been identified as the facilitator for the upcoming tabletop exercise. Whether this is your first time as a facilitator or you have experience, please use this document to help guide you through this process. Thank you for taking on this important role on behalf of the organization.

Before you continue, make sure you are familiar with the scope and objectives set by the organizers and planning team for the tabletop exercise. If those have not yet been identified, please refer to the organizer's guide for assistance. It can be found under Tools and Resources on the Private Sector Partner Portal (www.privatesector.nyc).

This scenario, based on a fictional power outage impacting New York City that affects your primary facility and employees, is designed to test your initial response to a no-notice incident. At the start of the incident, participants must deal with initial reactions, as well as incomplete information and uncertainty about safety conditions. As the scenario continues, the focus shifts to business continuity concerns.

This Facilitator Guide contains the text that will appear on the PowerPoint. Certain slides also include questions that you may use to encourage discussion. The questions are categorized based on the business continuity function to which they pertain as a way to help you steer discussion to areas relevant to your participants and exercise objectives. Not all of these questions will be relevant to your organization or to the particular participants. Additionally, in some cases, you may want to re-word the questions to prompt the participants to identify the problems that the questions address.

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Introduction

This facilitator manual contains some background about tabletop exercises, suggestions for how to run a successful tabletop exercise, as well as the current exercise scenario with possible questions to encourage discussion, and notes detailing the purpose of certain slides.

Background

What is a Tabletop Exercise?

A tabletop exercise is a facilitated discussion of a plan in an informal, low stress environment. It is like a problem-solving or brainstorming session where participants share capabilities and solve problems as a group based on their organization's existing plans and the determined objectives of the exercise.

The success of a tabletop exercise is determined by feedback from participants and the impact the feedback has on the evaluation and revision of policies, plans, and procedures.

What a Tabletop Exercise is Not

A tabletop exercise is neither the tool through which you make a plan nor the place for training and discussion about a plan. A prior step to holding a tabletop exercise is often a workshop to train and discuss a plan. This toolkit is meant to be used once your organization has a plan in place and is ready to evaluate it.

Why Run a Tabletop Exercise?

Tabletop exercises build organizational capacity, help organizations evaluate their business continuity plans and identify strengths and areas for improvement. These exercises provide training and awareness to staff who have an opportunity to rehearse their roles and responsibilities during an incident. Plus, they are low-cost and low-stakes.

How Long is a Tabletop Exercise?

A tabletop exercise usually lasts from one to four hours, but it can vary depending on the incident. Discussion times are open-ended, and participants are encouraged to take their time in arriving at in-depth decisions without time pressure. When the time is up, the activity is concluded.

There is never a perfect moment to run a tabletop exercise for everyone, but try to do so at a time that doesn't compete for everyone's attention.

Facilitating a Tabletop Exercise

The facilitator has a number of responsibilities, including:

- Introducing the narrative
- Encouraging problem solving
- Controlling the pace and flow of the exercise
- Stimulating discussion and drawing answers and solutions from the group (rather than supplying them)

Setting the Stage

The opening remarks and activities influence the whole exercise experience. Participants need to know what to expect, and to feel comfortable about being participants. Consider including the following elements at the start of your exercise:

- Begin by sincerely welcoming participants and putting them at ease.
- Brief the participants about what will happen. This should include a clear explanation of the exercise's purpose and objectives, agenda, ground rules, and procedures.
- Start the exercise by reading (or having someone read) the first two slides of background information.
- Try breaking the ice by beginning with a general question directed at one or two high-ranking individuals or to the group as a whole. Later, other questions can be addressed to other individuals.

Ways to Involve All Participants

It is important that everyone participates and that no one person dominates the discussion. Tips for involving all of the participants are summarized below:

- Give extra encouragement to those who are a little tentative.
- Recognize that junior staff might be hesitant to comment in front of senior management.
- Avoid the temptation to jump in with the right solutions when participants are struggling. This can hamper discussion. Instead, try to draw out answers from participants. They will be more likely to participate if they feel people are listening intently and sympathetically.
- Model and encourage the behaviors you want from participants.
- Make eye contact with participants.
- Acknowledge comments in a positive manner.

Controlling and Sustaining the Action

To maintain a high level of interest and to keep everyone involved, the facilitator needs to control and sustain the action. There are several ways to do this.

- Vary the pace. Give messages at different rates, perhaps even giving two at once to increase pace and interest.
- Maintain a balance between talking about a problem to death and moving along so fast that nothing gets settled. Don't hesitate to control the exercise tightly.
- Watch for signs of frustration or conflict. Always remember that the tabletop is an opportunity to evaluate your plan in a no-fault environment, and gaps should be expected. People may be sensitive or inexperienced. If you see mounting frustration or conflict, stop the exercise. Reach into your experience as a discussion leader to help participants resolve conflicts and feel comfortable.
- Keep it low-key. Avoid a bad experience by keeping in mind the low-key nature of the tabletop.
- If you spend all of your time on one big problem, maintain interest among participants, and reach consensus, then the tabletop can be considered a success. Push the participants past superficial solutions. A few carefully chosen, open-ended questions can keep the discussion going to a logical conclusion.
- Remember that not everyone will be equally knowledgeable about the plan that is being evaluated.

Note: The point is not to debate or discuss the City's response; the key is to be aware of the response and see how they impact your organization's response.

Using the Possible Questions

The questions that accompany the following scenario slides cover a broad range of plan components that can be evaluated. It is recommended that only the questions relevant to the tabletop exercise's scope and purpose be discussed. Not every question needs to be asked, and each scenario can be used multiple times to test different components of your plan. For example, if the goal is to evaluate the organization's communications strategy, it may not be necessary to ask participants about operating from a backup facility. Use your best judgement when deciding what questions to ask. Facilitator notes are also included on some of the slides to help you better understand the context.

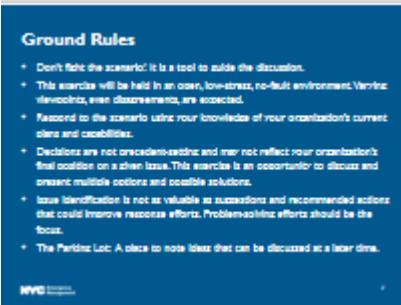
Scenario Slides & Possible Questions



1 Tabletop Exercise

Disclaimer: These customizable exercise templates were created for the use of private sector organizations by New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM). NYCEM is not responsible for any changes made to exercise materials by participating organizations. The scenarios presented are fictional and NYCEM cannot guarantee that the City agency actions depicted here will be the City's response for similar incidents. For more information about the resources NYC

Emergency Management have available, please visit us at NYC.gov/emergencymanagement or email us at publicprivate@oem.nyc.gov.



2 Ground Rules

Don't fight the scenario! It is a tool to guide the discussion. This exercise will be held in an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected. Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of your organization's current plans and capabilities. Decisions are not precedent-setting and may not reflect your organization's final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions. Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve response efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus. The Parking Lot: A place to note ideas that can be discussed at a later time.

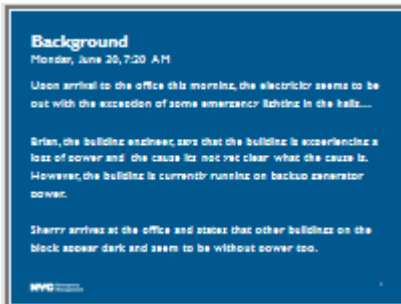
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Facilitator Notes:

- Make sure to explain in basic terms what a tabletop exercise is and how it works.
- Gently explain why the parking lot exists and the importance of keeping the conversation on track.



3 Background, Monday Morning, 7:30 AM

Upon arrival to the office this morning, the electricity seems to be out with the exception of some emergency lighting in the halls...

Brian, the building engineer, says that the building is experiencing a loss of power and it's not yet clear what the cause is. However, the building is currently running on backup generator power. Sherry arrives at the office and states that other buildings on the block appear dark and seem to be without power too.

Possible Questions for ALL

- Where does the organization get information from? Is someone at your organization responsible for maintaining situational awareness?
- Do you have a plan in place for how to deal with emergency events for which you have no advance warning?
- What actions, if any, will you take at this point?
- Does your organization take any general preparedness measures for a utility outage even when it is not a threat?
- Who at your organization is responsible for triggering a response to a utility outage? If that person is on vacation or unavailable, who else can start the response?

Possible Questions for CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Who is on your crisis management or response team? Do you have such a team? Would these people be able to come to the office? If not, could they fulfill their obligations from a remote location?
- If members of your response team are entirely unable to work, who will fill in for them?
- Which employees are considered essential to maintain critical functions?
- What are your organization’s dependencies? What or who do you rely on to complete your critical operations? What are they doing during the outage?

Possible Questions for IT, MANAGEMENT, and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Does your organization have the capability to communicate with employees? Will you attempt to get in touch with them at this time?
- Do you have policies in place permitting employees to work from home? If so, will your employees actually be able to work from home? Have you tested the technology?
- Have employees ever practiced working from home in non-emergency situations to ensure that everything functions properly? Can your network withstand the increased traffic from multiple employees working from home?



4 Power Disruption, Monday Morning, 8:00 AM

Consolidated Edison (Con Edison) confirms that they are currently experiencing a massive grid outage primarily affecting the west side of Manhattan. The cause of power failure is unknown at this time and remains to be under investigation.

Possible Questions for FACILITIES, IT, MANAGEMENT, and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Does the organization rely on backup power? Does your organization have generators? Fuel?
- How long can the organization be without power before critical functions are affected?
- Is there a plan for ensuring critical services stay up and running during the outage? Are your employees cross-trained to maintain critical operations?

- Do you have lines of succession and back-ups designated for important positions?
- What critical operations will need to get back up and running as soon as the outage is repaired?
- What operations can be postponed or canceled for a time?
- With interrupted phone line service, what are the concerns regarding communication capabilities?
- What else is the organization concerned about at this point?
- Is there a designated process for coordinating the organization's preparation?
- Does the organization have a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)?
- Can you physically prepare your facility for a power outage with no warning? Do you know which equipment needs to be protected and how it can be protected?
- Do you have an alternate work site? How quickly can you make it functional for your organization's needs?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Should you send a message to all of your employees? What should this message say?
- For those employees that have already arrived to work, is it safe for them to stay? What will they be doing while they wait for the power to return?

Facilitator Notes:

- Managers have to simultaneously consider their own concerns and fears as well as how to direct and lead their employees during emergencies.
- Participants should consider where they are getting information from. Some expected sources include notification systems, news outlets, social media, and upper management. Are these sources vetted and how does information get passed along in your organization?



5 CorpNet Notification, Monday Morning, 8:30 AM

New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM) messaging includes the following CorpNet notification: (NYCEM ALL CALL)

FDNY operations are ongoing. Con Edison reports a manhole fire occurred at the above location and impacted a transmission line. This has caused a power outage to the west side of Manhattan impacting approximately 38,000 customers including Lincoln Center, St. Luke's-

Roosevelt Hospital Center, and Columbus Circle. MTA reports there is no disruption to train service, however, there are no operational lights at the stations. Port Authority reports power went out at Penn Station and was immediately restored. There are no reports of train disruptions at this time. There are no reports of evacuations or injuries at this time. NYCEM is on scene. NYCEM will activate the EOC.

Facilitator Notes:

- The CorpNet program is managed by NYC Emergency Management and provides business partners with current, accurate information about emergencies to enhance awareness and aid decision making, should their businesses be affected. Businesses can enroll at PrivateSector.NYC.

Possible Questions for SECURITY and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Are any employees signed up for CorpNet?
- What is the organization concerned about at this point?

Possible Questions for CRISIS MANAGEMENT and IT

- Which of the organization’s operations will be affected by an outage lasting an extensive period of time, if any? For how long?
- Would you be able to contact vendors from outside of your facility?
- What operations might you need to cancel or postpone at this point?



6 ARE YOU READY?

PREPARE for a possible power outage:

Charge cell phone batteries, gather supplies like flashlights and extra batteries.

Limit the use of energy-intensive equipment such as washers, dryers, and air conditioners. Turn off lights/televisions when not needed.

All New Yorkers should sign up for NotifyNYC to receive up-to-date emergency alerts directly from NYCEM’s 24/7 Watch Command.

Facilitator Notes:

- Notify NYC is the City of New York's official source for information about emergency events and important City services. Alerts from Notify NYC comes directly from NYC Emergency Management’s 24/7 Watch Command, which monitors emergency activity in NYC and the metropolitan area. Participants can sign up at NYC.gov/notifynyc.



7 Expanding Impacts, Monday Morning, 9:00 AM

The MTA is now reporting that several train lines are impacted by signal light outages at Penn Station causing major delays and limited train service:

Expect mass transit disruptions on the A, C, D, E, F, M, 1, 2 & 3 train service in Manhattan in both directions.

The power outage is also impacting traffic signals, causing extensive traffic delays in the area of Midtown Manhattan in both directions.

Possible Questions for CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- How does the MTA report change your posture in regard to the organization’s response to the outage?

- Is the organization prepared to deal with staffing deficits related to commuting challenges?
- Do you want to message employees at this point? Do you have pre-canned messaging for this kind of incident? Who is responsible for sending it out?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

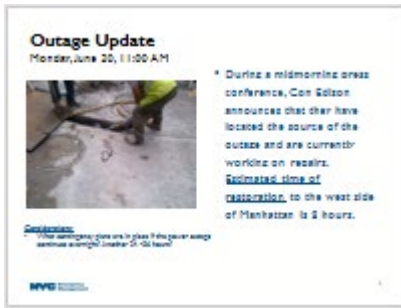
- What is the policy surrounding time off for an incident such as this one? Are employees being asked to telework?

Possible Questions for SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Considering the significant impact to travel, does a contingency plan exist for vendor delays or cancellations?

Possible Questions for IT and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Do you and your employees have access to business email from off-site?
- Will you have any other responsibilities to your business during the outage or the next business day?



8 Outage Update, Monday Morning, 11:00 AM

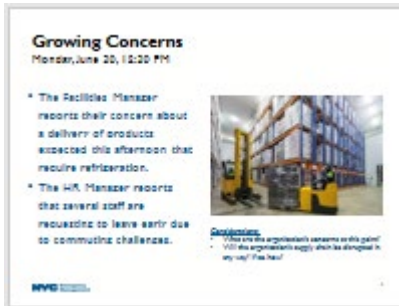
During a midmorning press conference, Con Edison announces that they have located the source of the outage and are currently working on repairs. Estimated time of restoration to the west side of Manhattan is 8 hours.

Possible Questions for ALL and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- What contingency plans are in place if the power outage continues overnight? Another 24-36 hours?
- Is there an employee responsible for following press conferences or any other updates related to the outage? How does the organization stay informed with the most up-to-date alerts?
- What impact will this continue to have on your employees?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- If you have not contacted all of your employees yet, do you want to do so now? What will you tell them?
- Who is responsible for sending out this type of message to employees? Is this person/are these people able to contact all of your employees from outside of your facility?
- Who around the table would honestly be able to work on securing the business while ensuring their own households are safe?



9 Growing Concerns, Monday Afternoon, 12:30 PM

The Facilities Manager reports their concern about a delivery of products expected this afternoon that require refrigeration. The HR Manager reports that several staff are requesting to leave early due to commuting challenges.

Possible Questions for IT, SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT, and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Will the organization's supply chain be disrupted in any way? If so, how?
- Do you know if your suppliers and vendors (including telephone service, internet provider, teleconferencing provider, and other technological support providers) are prepared for emergency situations? Will they be there when you need them? Do you have alternates in the event that one of your providers fails?
- Do you have a vendor/supplier contact list that you can access remotely if you need to use it?
- Are you able to contact these providers in the event of an emergency? At any time of day?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT and LEGAL

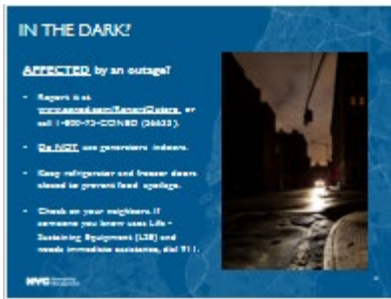
- Is the organization prepared to deal with ongoing staff tardiness and/or absenteeism due to commuting challenges?
- Should your employees come to work during this time?
 - If not, should they use vacation time? Sick time?
 - Will they be compensated if your office is closed?

Possible Questions for EMPLOYEE SAFETY and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Is there a place in your facility where critical functions staff could safely and comfortably shelter-in-place? If so, is it stocked with all of the necessary supplies?
- Do your employees have Go Bags?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT, and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- What will you tell your employees about working for the rest of the day? For tomorrow?
- Can you get in touch with all employees? When you do get in touch with them, what will you tell them?



10 IN THE DARK?

AFFECTED by an outage?

Report it at www.coned.com/ReportOutage or call 1-800-75-CONED (26633).

Do NOT use generators indoors.

Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to prevent food spoilage. Check on your neighbors. If someone you know uses Life-Sustaining Equipment (LSE) and needs immediate assistance, dial 911.

Facilitator Notes:

- Participants should consider the preparedness level of their own household. Do they have an emergency plan for family members and pets? Do they have a stay-at-home kit?



11 Moving Forward, Tuesday Morning, 5:00 AM

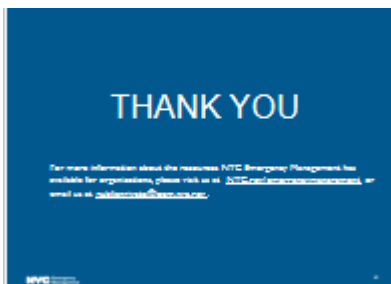
Power has been restored to the building, however...

Con Edison has disseminated alerts requesting customers to assist in relieving stress on the electric system by:

- Turning off non-essential electrical equipment
- Reducing or shutting down elevator service
- Switching to generator power prior to peak load periods

Possible Questions for CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- How will these requests affect the organization?
- What are necessary preparations the organization must take for potential additional disruptions?



13 THANK YOU

For more information about the resources that NYC Emergency Management has available for organizations, please visit us at www.nyc.gov/emergencymanagement or email us at publicprivate@oem.nyc.gov.