

# TABLETOP EXERCISE FACILITATOR'S GUIDE:

## ACTIVE SHOOTER EVENT

## INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to welcome all of you to today's tabletop exercise. I want to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to be here today. This is a great opportunity for us to share knowledge and information that can help us improve our plans, and also to get to know each other better and get a good feel for what it will be like during a real emergency, when different teams will need to work together under what would most likely be incredibly stressful circumstances.

For this tabletop, there are three different roles. As the exercise facilitator, my job is to provide instructions, tell the story, introduce questions and help guide the discussions and answer any questions you may have. As participants, your role is to immerse yourselves in the story and respond as if the scenario were actually happening. Feel free to use any resources that are available to you, such as your organization's policies and procedures, your Business Continuity Plan (BCP), etc. We also have \_\_\_\_\_ with us today as an observer to observe the tabletop exercise, take notes and assess the entire process so we can learn lessons for future exercises.

I know some of you here today have participated in tabletop exercises before, but for others, it may be your first time. So I'd like to begin by briefly going over what exactly a tabletop exercise is and the format we'll be following as we proceed.

A tabletop exercise is when you bring together a group of people from different parts of the organization to review and discuss a hypothetical emergency situation step-by-step to determine how effectively the overall team would respond to an actual emergency. It allows participants to talk through plans or problems related to a chosen topic in an informal and stress-free environment. By doing this, we'll be able to identify strengths and weaknesses in our plans and

have an opportunity to discuss policies, resources, communication, coordination, data management, and other aspects of emergency preparedness.

This exercise will also help us all better understand the roles and responsibilities each participant has and help us build a better team. During an emergency it is critical that everyone understand each team member's role and how interdependent they are. Everyone should speak freely and openly exchange ideas. This discussion-based exercise should serve as a springboard for further planning and future exercises. The more we practice the more experience we gain and the more confident we'll be when called in to action.

Here are a few ground rules for today's exercise. First and foremost, this is a training and learning exercise – not a test, and there are no hidden agendas or trick questions.

Try to be in the mindset that this scenario is real. The timeline in the story is structured as realistically as possible, so pay attention to the day and time. During the exercise, you should answer in your emergency response role, following the procedures and protocols you've learned.

The goal of today's exercise is to assess the organization's capabilities to respond to and recover from a multi-hazard incident in accordance with established plans. We want to practice working together during an emergency and improve the coordination between and among the various Crisis Teams [change the following terms according to the emergency response roles within your organization]. We will evaluate the communication process between the Executive Crisis Team, Crisis Leaders and Crisis Managers. Finally we want to assess the decision-making process as it deals with the activation of the Business Continuity Plans and the execution by the Business Continuity Teams.

The scenario that we will be discussing today has a number of scenario “updates” that provide information as the situation develops and conditions change. After each update, we’ll stop and have a group discussion about what is going on so far and the types of actions we would take at that point based on what we know. At the end of the scenario, everyone will participate in a debriefing, or “hot wash”, in which we will discuss how the exercise went, what we learned from the experience, and what action steps we can take based on the lessons learned. This exercise is designed to last about 30 minutes. However, questions and dialogue are encouraged and may extend the length of the exercise accordingly.

First, some clarification about what an active shooter actually is:

### **What is an active shooter event?**

- When a suspect or assailant enters an office with the intent to harm and cause injury.
- During the event, the threat is not contained and there is immediate risk of death and injury.

### **Mentality of an active shooter:**

- Desire is to kill and seriously injure without concern for his safety or threat of capture.
- Generally has intended victims and will search them out.
- May accept targets of opportunity while searching for or after finding intended victims.
- Will continue to move throughout building/area until stopped by law enforcement, suicide, or other intervention.

Are there any questions? [answer questions/address concerns]

Let's get started!

## EXERCISE BEGINS

Set the stage by establishing the location, date and time.

### **Update:**

Date: Friday, February 19

Time: 11:00am EST

A member of your finance department, who has been with your company for eight years, has just had his employment terminated. As he is escorted out of the building by security, he tells them they will regret treating him like this.

- Who should be informed of this behavior?
- What concerns might you have?
- What actions would you consider taking, if any, at this stage?

### **Update:**

Date: Monday, April 5

Time: 9:15 am EST

A popping sound is heard within the building. An employee runs into your office shouting that there is a man firing a gun in the hall.

- What actions should you take?
- How are you communicating with employees? Who is communicating?
- Who is in charge of the situation?

**Update:**

You decide to shelter in place in an office, and secure the immediate area.. The popping noises seem to be coming from your floor. There is yelling and screaming outside your door.

- What actions are taken to secure the area?
- Who is responsible for contacting law enforcement?
  - What information do you relay to them?
- What are you telling your employees?

**Update:**

A woman knocks frantically on your door pleading to be let in.

- What action will you take to ensure your office remains secure?
  - What will you do about the woman outside your door?
- What additional concerns do you have at this time?

**Update:**

You hear someone attempting to open the door, then several loud shots. After a few minutes of silence, it appears that the shooter may have moved on.

- What are your immediate concerns at this time?
- What do you tell coworkers sheltering in place with you?

**Update:**

For nearly an hour there is no sound from outside your door. Employees are receiving calls from family members who have learned of the active shooter in your building. Emergency personnel can be seen outside. Several employees express interest in leaving.

- Who is responsible for deciding when it is safe to leave the secure area?
- How will family members be contacted?

**Update:**

Law enforcement personnel arrive outside your office door and direct you to evacuate the building.

- How do you prepare your employees for the disturbing scenes they may encounter as they evacuate?
- Who is responsible for communicating with law enforcement?
- What concerns do you have leaving your office unsecure?

**Update:**

Upon evacuation, your employees are cornered by news reporters asking about the experience. Some employees do not have their car or house keys and are concerned about getting home.

- Who is responsible for communicating with news media?
  - What information will you give them?
  - Can you control who else the media approaches? If not, what can you do?
- How will your employees get home?
  - Will you request access back into the building? Who would go in?

**Update:**

The building is designated a crime scene and is closed for a week.

- Who initiates business continuity plans?
- What else needs to be considered?
- How is information disseminated to employees?

**Update:**

Date: Monday, April 12

You are able to get back into the building and resume normal business operations. Several employees ask for more time to emotionally recover from the event.

- Are you able to continue normal business operations using fewer staff?
- How will you accommodate individuals who have been emotionally traumatized by the event?
- What resources will you make available to all staff?
- How will you communicate your company's resilience to concerned clients?

**Additional considerations:**

- Upon arriving on scene, law enforcement officials will remove the threat before treating victims and evacuating survivors. It is important to be patient and stay in the secure area until you are instructed to evacuate
- Because some employees may not feel comfortable returning to work right away, be prepared to work with a dispersed or smaller work force following an active shooter event.
- Ensure mental health professionals are available for employees.

\*\*\* 15-minute break \*\*\*

## EXERCISE HOT WASH

Now let's look back at the exercise and see what we learned from this experience and how we can use it to improve our overall response plan. This is your chance to provide some feedback on the exercise and on how well you think we responded to the threat depicted in the scenario. Your answers to the following questions should be based on how the participants in this room responded to the situation depicted in the scenario according to the discussion we had after each



update, not based on things that happened within the scenario itself. Everyone's input is important, so please feel free to share your thoughts.

- How do you think the exercise went overall?
  - What would make this exercise better?
- What did you learn from this scenario?
- What are the areas of concerns at this point?
- What action steps do we need to take, based on the lessons learned?
  - Plans
  - Procedures
  - Training
  - Other Suggestions
- Who is responsible for each of the action steps?

### **\*\*\*Pass out Participant Feedback Form\*\*\***

Thank you again for taking the time today. Your active participation and ideas will help ensure that your organization is better able to respond to any emergency situation.