

# Tabletop Exercise

## Design a Tabletop Exercise in 30 Minutes or Less

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) defines a “Tabletop Exercise,” or TTX, as “intended to generate discussion of various issues regarding a hypothetical, simulated emergency.” A basic TTX can be completed with just four components: Capabilities, Objectives, a Scenario, and some Discussion Questions.



## Part I: Capabilities (5 Minutes)

All exercises should be aligned with “core capabilities.” Core Capabilities are distinct critical elements necessary to achieve specific areas of emergency preparedness and response. These areas are: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.

Capabilities provide a common vocabulary for all types of response partners to discuss the more important functions of emergency response. These capabilities need to be developed across the entire community to ensure national preparedness.

There are different types of capabilities. For healthcare, we recommend the **Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) 2017 - 2022 Health Care Preparedness and Response Capabilities**.

Today, we are only going to focus on two capabilities: Capability 2, and Capability 4.

**Capability 2** refers to the ability of health care organizations to plan and collaborate to share and analyze information, manage and share resources, and coordinate strategies to deliver medical care during an emergency.

**Capability 4** refers to the timely and efficient delivery of care to patients even when the demand for services exceeds available supply.

### ASPR Health Care Capabilities

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|---|---|
| Capability 1:<br>Foundation<br>for Health<br>Care and<br>Medical<br>Readiness | Capability 2:<br><b>Health Care<br/>and Medical<br/>Response<br/>Coordination</b> |
| Capability 3:<br>Continuity of<br>Health Care<br>Service<br>Delivery          | Capability<br><b>4: Medical<br/>Surge</b>   |

More on the ASPR 2017 – 2022 Health Care Preparedness and Response Capabilities can be found here:

<https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/hpp/reports/Documents/2017-2022-healthcare-pr-capabilities.pdf>



## Part II: Draft Your Objectives (10 Minutes)

An objective is a distinct outcome that an organization wishes to achieve during an exercise.

**Part II Directions:** Based on the capabilities, you will write 2 – 3 objectives for your tabletop exercise. Note that objectives need to be tailored for your agency or facility, so you shouldn't necessarily use an objective that is already in the ASPR Capabilities document. Those objectives are meant as a starting place.



SMART Guidelines for Exercise Objectives	
<b>Specific</b>	Objectives should address the five Ws- who, what, when, where, and why. The objective specifies what needs to be done with a timeline for completion.
<b>Measurable</b>	Objectives should include numeric or descriptive measures that define quantity, quality, cost, etc. Their focus should be on observable actions and outcomes.
<b>Achievable</b>	Objectives should be within the control, influence, and resources of exercise play and participant actions.
<b>Relevant</b>	Objectives should be instrumental to the mission of the organization and link to its goals or strategic intent.
<b>Time-bound</b>	A specified and reasonable timeframe should be incorporated into all objectives.

### Sample Objectives

*(Capability 2: Health Care and Medical Response Coordination. Activity 2 – Information Access. Pg 29)*

1. Tabletop participants will identify the types of information that can and will be shared amongst health care coalition partners during response efforts to the scenario, within the first 30 minutes of the TTX.

*(Capability 3: Continuity of Health Care Service Delivery. Objective 1 - Identify Essential Functions. Pg 32)*

2. Tabletop participants will determine the essential functions for health care delivery that need to be continued within the context of the scenario, in rank order of importance, by the end of the TTX.

*(Capability 4: Medical Surge. Activity 8 – Behavioral Health Needs. Pg 53)*

3. Tabletop participants will identify at least two strategies for addressing the behavioral health needs of survivors, responders, and/or their family members within the context of the scenario, by the end of the TTX.

## Part III: Pick A Scenario (5 Minutes)

A scenario is “an outline or model of the simulated sequence of events for the exercise.” The scenario could be a narrative paragraph, or simple a timeline of events. The scenario provides the background and context necessary for the participants to achieve the objectives for the exercise.

The scenario should always be based on your objectives.

**Part III Directions:** With your group, analyze the two – three objectives that you have created for your tabletop exercise. What type of scenario would best test these objectives?

Here are a few examples. If I want to test X, then what type of disaster or emergency would involve those outcomes?

**Public Warning and Communication → Tsunami**

**Personal Protective Equipment Use → Emerging Infectious Disease**

**Facility Damage Assessment → Earthquake**

Your group should come up with one scenario that you all agree can feasibly test your objectives.

*Additional points for creativity and customizing the scenario to fit your needs!*

Example: A hospital decided to test, in an exercise, what would happen if they could not get resources or staff in or out of the hospital itself. Their solution? A scenario in which aliens came to earth and placed a large donut over the entire facility, blocking all ingress and egress routes.

A scenario is a means to an end! It does not necessarily have to be feasible, as long as it helps your facility test the objectives you need to develop as an organization.



*Your scenario should be designed to test your objectives.*

### **Sample Scenarios:**

Active Shooter  
Power Outage  
Extreme Heat  
Flooding  
Earthquake  
Bio-Terror  
Fire  
Cyber Attack  
Pandemic Influenza  
Food-borne Illness  
Bomb Threat  
Chemical Disaster  
Pediatric Surge  
Local Zika Outbreak  
Civil Disturbance  
Landslide

## Part IV: Three Tabletop Exercise Questions

**Part IV Directions:** Based on the objectives and the scenario chosen, you will draft three discussion questions for your tabletop exercise participants to address, as a group. Each question should be aimed at the achievement of an objective.

For example, if you want to test your facility's backup communication technologies, a discussion question might be:

*What communication technologies will you utilize to warn the public of the incoming tsunami? Who is responsible for these systems? What happens if one of these systems fail?*

Discussion questions can have more than one part. Consider the "who, what, where, why, and when" for each question. Ensure that your participants will feasibly be able to answer each question.



Consider the who, what, where, why, and when for each question

### Sample Discussion Questions:

1. At what point in this scenario would the Emergency Operations Plan be activated? At what level? What does activation entail at your facility?
2. What actions would your facility's staff take if you were put on "high alert" as a potential target of an attack?
3. What behavioral health resources are available to your staff, victims, and family members during an incident? What employee assistance programs would staff have access to?
4. What are the most important, essential functions for your facility to continue throughout response? Do any of your programs need to be temporarily halted or reassigned to other staff?
5. At what point in this scenario would you communicate a status update to your local emergency management authorities? Who is responsible for this communication?
6. What are the long-term implications of this scenario? Can the facility sustain a response effort for days, weeks, or even months if the pandemic is extended over a lengthy period of time?
7. How is your facility integrating recovery planning into response efforts? Do you write a recovery plan as part of response? If so, when? Who is responsible for this?

## CUSTOMIZING YOUR TABLETOP EXERCISE - WORKSHEET GROUP:

Capabilities

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Objectives

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Scenario

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Discussion Questions

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# Presentation Resources

For more information about the CMS Rule:

- <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep/Emergency-Prep-Rule.html>
- Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/09/16/2016-21404/medicare-and-medicaid-programs-emergency-preparedness-requirements-for-medicare-and-medicaid>
- Yale New Haven Health System's Crosswalk: <http://www.ihatoday.org/uploadDocs/1/yalenewhavencrosswalk.pdf>
- ASPR TRACIE's "CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule: Resources at Your Fingertips" <https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/cms-ep-rule-resources-at-yourfingertips.pdf>

Emergency Plans, Communication Plans, and Policy/Procedures:

- California Hospital Association: <http://www.calhospitalprepare.org/emergency-operations-plan>
- CMS Emergency Preparedness Checklist: [https://www.cms.gov/medicare/provider-enrollment-and-certification/surveycertemergprep/downloads/sandc\\_epchecklist\\_provider.pdf](https://www.cms.gov/medicare/provider-enrollment-and-certification/surveycertemergprep/downloads/sandc_epchecklist_provider.pdf)
- Conversations with Executive Leadership Toolkit: <http://cdphready.org/hospital-resiliency-executive-briefing-toolkit/>

Trainings:

- CDPHReady.org: <http://cdphready.org/>
- Yale New Haven Health System Training: <http://ynhhs.emergencyeducation.org/>
- The Joint Commission's Emergency Management Resources for Healthcare: [https://www.jointcommission.org/emergency\\_management.aspx](https://www.jointcommission.org/emergency_management.aspx)
- CDC's "Introducing the Healthcare Preparedness Toolbox": <http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/healthcare>
- 15 'til 50 Medical Surge Toolkit: <http://cdphready.org/15-til-50-mass-casualty-incident-toolkit/>
- Toolbox - A Resource Guide for Healthcare Providers (PDF) [https://www.ynhhs.org/~media/files/emergency/2014\\_cepdrtoolbox.pdf](https://www.ynhhs.org/~media/files/emergency/2014_cepdrtoolbox.pdf)

Exercises:

- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program: Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (2013): [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1914-25045-8890/hseep\\_apr13\\_.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1914-25045-8890/hseep_apr13_.pdf)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. "Hospital Preparedness Exercises" 2010. <https://archive.ahrq.gov/prep/hospexp.htm> and <https://archive.ahrq.gov/prep/hospexguide/hospex2.htm>
- Radiological Injury Treatment Network: <https://ritn.net/>
- California Hospital Association: <http://www.calhospitalprepare.org/planning-exercise>
- Statewide Medical and Health Exercise: [californiamedicalhealthexercise.com](http://californiamedicalhealthexercise.com)