Designing Functional or Full-scale Operations-based Exercises with Lessons Learned, Artificialities and Realism

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Operations-based Exercises

• Functional or full-scale
  – Complex
  – Resource intensive
  – Multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional
    • numerous first responders
  – Field operations
  – Command Post
  – Test many facets of emergency response and recovery
  – Incident or Unified Command System
  – Real-time
  – Stressful environment
  – Mirrors a real event
Role of Exercise Planners

- Initiate the process
- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
  - primary responsibility
    - Design
    - Execute
    - Evaluate
- Includes local, regional, national response communities
More than a Year before the Exercise

Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan (MTEP)

– facilitate exercise coordination throughout your agency, with interagency partners, and other stakeholders

– budgets

– involve outside agencies and organizations as well as industry participants

– coordinate training and exercises with your stakeholders
Government and Industry Cooperation and Participation

• From government perspective
  – Industry participation critical
  – Everyone needs early notification
    • scheduling functional and full-scale exercises
    • minimum a year or two before the operations-based exercise
    • budget personnel and equipment
    • commitment to participate, plan
Within a Year Before the Exercise

- Multi-agency Pre-exercise training
  - Content of contingency plans
  - Better understanding of roles and responsibilities within the Incident Command System
  - Specific training that is associated with exercise objectives; i.e. shoreline cleanup assessment; alternative response capabilities
During Exercise Design Meetings

- Artificialities may prepare the response organization:
  - When to start the exercise
  - Command post set up prior to the exercise
  - Develop a pre exercise Organization Chart (ICS form 207)
When to Start the Exercise

• Factors
  – Time: 1, 2 or more days
  – Start with incident, notifications, on scene response, command post
  – Day 2 or later issues
  – Can multi-agencies participate outside normal business day
  – Balance field activities with maximize multi-agency personnel to work within ICS
How much can you do in 1 day?

• Will time be actual, condensed, or simulated?
  – Incident occurs
  – Notifications
  – Initial response on scene
  – Mobilization to a command post
  – Mitigation tactics
One Day Exercise

• Night time
  – Real or simulate
    • notifications
    • first responders on scene

• Day time
  – Mobilization to command post for meaningful ICS work
  – Field mitigation tactics
Multiple Day Exercise

• Do more
  – Initial response
  – Initial response plus additional issues
  – Issues beyond day 1 or 2
  • Week 2; Month 2
Drills

- Separated from and performed independent of functional or full scale
  - notifications
  - Multi-agency first responders on scene
  - Mobilization to and establishing a command post
Pre exercise Command Post set up

• CPs should be identified in Contingency plans for large scale response organization
  – No: opportunity to address issues
    • Space; infrastructure; power; phones; internet; computer network; interagency communications
  – Yes: opportunity to test and verify
Pre exercise Command Post set up

- Maximize multi-agency team work:
  - Recommend set up command post before exercise
    - Minimum: phone lines and phones
- Even pre-established command posts have modifications and rearrangements
- Document lessons learned for plan
Command Post Designs

Proposed Command Post Design

- Status Boards for Situation Display
  - Operations Section
  - Planning Section
- Communications Unit
  - 1 Outgoing Fax
  - 1 Incoming Fax
- Logistics Section
- Finance/Admin Section
- Main Entrance
- Security & Check In
- Command Staff
- Unified Command
- Joint Information Center
- Meeting Room For 30
- Copier
Command Post Designs

Left CP uses hard partitions to separate working areas within a gymnasium and bottom right remains open within a warehouse.
Develop a Pre Exercise Organization Chart (ICS form 207)

- Why? minimize chaos at check in
- Always lost personnel
  - Experienced Liaison Officer (LNO)
  - Assist placing into organization
  - At check in have designated area to wait for the LNO
Develop a Pre Exercise Organization Chart (ICS form 207)

- Use experienced Incident Management Team (IMT) personnel
  - In conjunction with your unit’s personnel
  - Fill key command and general staff ICS positions
    - Planning Section Chief
      - Planning P process
      - Develop an Incident Action Plan
Initial Response

- Incident/Event Notification
- Initial Response & Assessment
- Initial UC Meeting

- Incident Brief ICS-201
- Initial UC Meeting

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- Initial UC Meeting

- Executive Plan & Assess Progress
- New Ops Period Begins

- IC / UC Develop/ Update Objectives Meeting
- Command & General Staff Meeting / Briefing

- Prepare for the Tactics Meeting
- Planning Meeting

- IAP Prep & Approval Meeting
- Operations Briefing

- Preparing for the Planning Meeting
Develop a Pre Exercise Organization Chart (ICS form 207)

- Lessons learned:
  - Contingency plans should include sample 207s for anticipated incidents such as security, pollution, or mass rescue.
  - 207s should not list specific names, but rather organizations within your community

- Individual organizations develop own Watch Quarter and Station Bills to identify personnel by name
Incident Briefing (ICS form 201) or Incident Action Plan (IAP):
Incident Briefing (ICS form 201) or Incident Action Plan (IAP):

- Pre-exercise, When and how to develop
- Factors
  - Time for exercise: 1, 2 or more days
  - Objectives: notifications, initial response, day 2 or later issues
  - Transfer of command
    - Incident Commander to unified command
- For exercises that run real time beginning with an incident occurring
  - players do it all: notifications, response on scene to mitigate the scenario
  - players develop the 201 and or the IAP.
Incident Briefing (ICS form 201) or Incident Action Plan (IAP):

• If the exercise begins several hours or days after initial incident:
  – simulates notifications
  – initial response and/or later

• Design team develops the 201 or IAP
  – Need input from real primary decision makers
    • incident commander(s) or unified commander’s
  – A separate table top exercise with these primary decision makers
    • Document decisions and actions taken up until the start of the exercise
Incident Briefing (ICS form 201) or Incident Action Plan (IAP): Lessons learned:

- You need the primary decision maker at the TTX Representative may not portray their supervisor.
- Exercises have started with primary decision maker disagreeing with representative.
- Exercise time is lost to readdress actions and decisions.
- Exercise may continue with limited senior engagement.
- When representative is used, ensure the primary person reviews at least 2 weeks before the exercise.
Plan Field Operations

• Test new strategies and tactics or validate existing ones
• Exercise command and control on scene
• Test communications between the multi-agencies
Test Strategies and Tactics

Safety:

- Field activity challenges without injuries
  - Multi-agency 1st responders demonstrate
    - Who is in charge.
    - Process to identify and address safety hazards
    - Identify the public safety and health issues
  - Overseen by “Controller Safety Officer”
Test Strategies and Tactics

• Oil and chemical exercises:
  – Deploy tactical pollution response equipment per protection strategies in the Area Contingency Plan.
  – Deployed equipment will tell:
    • Performance standards for environment of geographic area
    • Identify circulation patterns and natural/historic collection areas
    • Necessity for supplemental equipment
    • Limitations of launch sites
    • Adequacy of on scene mobile command posts
  – Lessons learned for plan
Test Strategies and Tactics

• Area Maritime Security (AMS) exercises:
  – Identify all resources per law enforcement agency; capabilities
  – Clarify Rules of Engagement/Use of Force Policy; per scenario
  – Demonstrate multi-agency vessel/facility boardings
  – Marine Transportation Safety Act regulated facilities implement all security measures per Maritime Security level.
Exercise Command and Control

• Multiagency first responders arrive on scene
  – Who is in charge of the scene; per agency
  – Understand each others authority, jurisdiction, responsibility, role, and resources
  – Respond in accordance with a plan
    • Team or unilateral
    – HAZMAT teams
Communications

- Multi-agency communication challenges
  - Geographic area, platforms, equipment
    - capabilities and limitations
- Some areas met with Communications Plan
  - equipment, frequencies, process
- Lessons learned
Exercise Execution

• Developing an Incident Action Plan within a normal business day: realistic or artificial?
  – Challenging for a new response organization
  – Need experienced Incident Management Team
  – Quality IAP with assignment lists (204s)
Exercise Execution

• Resolve participant frustration:
  – Use experienced and knowledgeable IMT in key ICS positions or as mentors/coaches
  – For 2 day or more exercise, continue with the Planning P process on day 2 where it ended on day 1
  – For 1 day exercise, focus on quality and let the Planning P process proceed as far as it can
Conclusion

Designing exercises that provide:

- Proper stakeholder exercise notification
- Pre-exercise training
- Pre-identifying and logistically setting up a command post
- Appropriate field operations
- A pre-exercise organization chart

Optimizes time for:

- Multi-agency personnel to work as a team
- Individuals to be proficient in ICS
- Develop a quality Incident Action Plan