



The Ultimate Guide to Crisis Management Tabletop Exercises

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO DESIGNING AND DELIVERING YOUR OWN HIGH-QUALITY, ENGAGING, CRISIS MANAGEMENT TABLETOP EXERCISES.

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— CHAPTER ONE

Exercises for Corporations

You may have just spent a large amount of time, effort and money developing your Crisis Management Plan. But a crucial question arises: How do you know if your plan will work when it's needed? How do you know if your response team can collaborate and make crisis-related decisions effectively? The answer is simple, but all too often ignored: you need to validate that your plan works and that your response team is functioning well by testing them with a tabletop exercise, also referred to as a war game.

The reason why war games work to solve so many different kinds of significant business challenges is because they allow decision-makers to make and learn from mistakes without risking career-limiting failures in real life. Further, decision-makers can make these mistakes in a safe, unthreatening, game-like environment, while responding to a wide variety of realistically presented situations based on facts. The exercise is an occasion to “rehearse the future,” an opportunity that does not present itself in day-to-day operations.

PreparedEX has thousands of hours of experience in crisis preparedness, running drills, functional exercises and tabletop exercises.

The techniques we employ have their genesis in age-old military war games. Our partners/consultants have military backgrounds or have been involved in military war games and have found the techniques of war gaming used in the military to be well-suited to the various kinds of corporate exercises needed for testing crisis preparedness.



The term, “war game” is simply a translation of the German term, “Krieg spiel.” Some organizations may feel that the term “war game” is too militaristic for their environment. We use whatever term the client is comfortable with, such as tabletop exercise. But regardless of what it’s called, the main objective of an exercise is always the same: improve crisis response and crisis management by assessing and improving plans and response teams through exercises.

Military terms persist in crisis preparedness because they are often so fitting. Carl von Clausewitz, the great German-Prussian soldier and military theorist famously referred to “the fog of war” -- the need to make decisions without all the knowledge one would want. Training one’s mind, and those of an entire leadership team, to make decisions despite uncertainty and ambiguity is an especially important skill set, one that’s very difficult to acquire. War gaming is one of the few techniques that have successfully accomplished decision-making training without waiting for the potentially disastrous outcomes of “on the job training.”

Exercises that test crisis plans and response teams are also of great value to corporations when adapted for other challenges



For example, examining the ramifications of new concepts, new technologies, competitor responses to business strategies, for finding new solutions to old problems, and for developing and assessing business continuity plans.

It is important to remember that a war game or tabletop exercise does not necessarily have to completely solve a particular problem. More broadly, the exercise helps leaders/managers think more critically about their circumstances – even in the “fog of war.” It exposes or amplifies questions that require further study (possibly, through additional war gaming/exercises). It trains people and organizations in the skills required to make sound decisions in the face of uncertainty.

Through the years we have found that in military organizations as well as in corporations that the individuals who develop the plans are often not the ones implementing the plan during a crisis. Therefore, it is important for the ones who will implement the plan to participate in exercises to become familiar with the plan and identify if any holes or gaps exist. Our exercises are designed to assist corporations in determining what should go into their new or existing plans, and where holes or gaps in an existing plan may exist.

Often at the end of an exercise the comment is heard, “I didn’t know that I didn’t know that.”

You cannot work on a problem successfully unless you fully know what the problem is. Exercises or war games that realistically present crisis scenarios to which the crisis team must respond help corporations identify those unknowns.



— CHAPTER TWO

Exercise Types/Objectives/ Evaluation Criteria

Exercise Types

Whether yours is a start-up company, an older, well-established multi-national company, an organization undergoing a leadership change, a company that has just completed a merger or is in the process of developing a new business strategy or contingency plans, all organizations should consider the advantages of implementing a comprehensive exercise program.

A search on the Internet reveals that there are at least ten different types/levels of preparedness exercises being used today (e.g., Seminars Workshops, Tabletop Exercises, War Games, Drills, Functional Exercises, Full-Scale Exercises, Command Post Exercises, Operations Center Exercises, Case Studies). There are similarities in many of the aforementioned.

The majority of organizations involved in the conduct of exercises employ the US Federal Government's identification of five different levels of exercises:

Orientation Seminar:

This is a low-stress, informal discussion in a group setting with little or no simulation. The orientation seminar is used to provide information and introduce people to the policies, plans and procedures in the organization's contingency planning.

Drill:

This is the exercise most organizations are familiar with. The drill is a coordinated, supervised exercise used to test a single specific operation or function. It involves deployment of equipment and personnel.

Tabletop Exercise:

This is a facilitated, group analysis of an emergency situation in an informal, stress-free environment. The Tabletop Exercise is designed for examination of operational plans, problem identification, and in-depth problem solving. There are basically two types of tabletop exercises -- simple and enhanced.

- A simple tabletop exercise is a facilitated analysis of a specific situation held in an informal setting. It is designed to elicit constructive discussion as participants examine and resolve problems based on existing operational plans and identify where those plans need to be refined. The success of the exercise is largely determined by group participation in the identification of problem areas. There is minimal simulation in a tabletop exercise. Equipment is not used, resources are not deployed, and time pressures are usually not introduced. This is the simplest type of exercise to conduct in terms of planning, preparation, and coordination.
- An enhanced tabletop exercise is an interactive exercise that helps test the capability of an organization to respond to a realistically simulated crisis. The exercise tests multiple aspects of an organization's operational and communication plans. It demands from participants a coordinated response to a crisis in a time-pressured, realistic simulation that involves several departments within an organization. An enhanced tabletop exercise focuses on the coordination, integration, and interaction of an organization's plans, policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities before, during, and after the simulated event. It places heavy emphasis on communication among all the departments and/or stakeholders participating in the exercise. This type of exercise will require much more planning, preparation, and coordination than a simple tabletop exercise.

To a large extent, the value and benefit of an enhanced tabletop exercise comes from bringing representatives from all of the stakeholder roles together to participate in the exercise. You can run an enhanced tabletop exercise without actual representatives present from all the various stakeholder groups that would inevitably be part of many crises. News media, government regulators, local law enforcement, whatever group or individual you choose to represent in the exercise can be filled by stand-ins -- individuals who are familiar with the mission of the missing stakeholder and can role play. It is recommended that you note during your after-action review that actions taken by the missing agency may have been different than those taken by the "stand-ins" during the course of the exercise.

Functional Exercise:

The Functional Exercise is a fully simulated interactive exercise that tests the capability of an organization to respond to a simulated event. This exercise focuses on the coordination of multiple functions of organizations and takes place in an Emergency Operations Center. The Functional Exercise strives for realism, short of actual deployment of equipment and personnel.



Full-Scale Exercise:

The Full-Scale Exercise is a simulated event that is made as real as possible in every detail. It is an exercise of an emergency response plan to a particular emergency (e.g., hurricane, earthquake, explosion, hazardous material spill, violence in work place, etc.), and involves all emergency response functions and requires full deployment of equipment and personnel. Typically, in a business setting this exercise should include fire, law enforcement, emergency management and other agencies and organizations as identified in the scenario.

The vTTX (Virtual Tabletop Exercise)

In recent times organizations have transitioned successfully to working virtually through conferencing tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Google Meet to name a few. These technologies are very useful for running virtual exercises due to their capabilities. Breakout groups, digital whiteboards, attendance reports, polling, quizzes and much more. It's important that you understand the capabilities of the virtual technology that your organization uses.

Exercise Objectives

One of the most important, if not the most important step, in the design and preparation of an exercise is to determine the exercise objective(s). It is not unusual for individuals planning an exercise to want to begin by focusing on a specific scenario. While the particular scenario they want to use may work, we have experienced situations where the scenario may not allow them to reach the objective(s) they want to achieve. It helps to follow the S.M.A.R.T. method when developing objectives.

Keep objectives...

- Simple & Specific. A good objective is simply and clearly phrased. It is brief and easy to understand. What exactly do you want to accomplish? Ask the question, “Why are we doing this?”
- Measurable. Can it be measured? The objective is to gauge the level of performance, so that observable results are made quantifiable in some manner, and the evaluation can tell when an objective has been met. This can be simple to put in exercise evaluators’ hands in the form of a series of questions at different points in the exercise where evaluators can rate their answers on a five-point scale.
- Achievable. Objectives should not be too tough to achieve. They should be reasonable in terms of resources needed. Can you get it done in the time given?
- Realistic. Even though an objective might be achievable, it might not be realistic for the exercise. Will it lead to desirable results?
- Timely. When will it be accomplished?

Once the objectives are determined, you then decide what game mechanics and scenario will allow you to address the stated objective(s) during the exercise.



— OUR SERVICES

Crisis Simulation Exercises

PreparedEx has been designing and delivering exercises for twelve years and has over sixty years of combined expertise within the crisis simulation, corporate war-gaming and exercise space.

If you need help designing your tabletop exercise, contact one of our exercise design specialists today! www.preparedex.com/#contact

Evaluation:

Exercises should be carefully evaluated to determine whether exercise objectives were met and to identify opportunities for program improvement.

The Hotwash:

The first formal evaluation takes the form of a brief group discussion held immediately at the close of the exercise: the “hot wash.” The term is borrowed, once again, from military exercises. It is a great way to solicit impromptu feedback on exercise performance and identify suggestions for improvement. The preliminary hot wash information compiles the initial impressions and observations of players and controllers of the exercise and identifies the key issues and findings that emerged during the exercise. This vital information will be further developed, analyzed and used in preparing the comprehensive “After-Action Report” (AAR).

A successful hot wash has these characteristics:

- Short time duration
- Facilitated discussion format
- Constructive comments only
- Identify things that:
 - Went well
 - Need improvement
- Identify individual(s) who will take ownership for addressing issues identified as needing improvement

Evaluation Forms that exercise participants fill out are another way for participants to provide their all-important comments and suggestions. As we’ll see in more detail below, an after-action report that documents suggestions for improvement should be compiled following the exercise and copies should be distributed to management and others.





— CHAPTER THREE

Scenario & Master Scenario Events List Development

Scenario Development

In an earlier chapter we addressed the importance of determining the main objective before selecting a scenario for a war game or exercise. Once the main objective is decided, the exercise scenario can then be developed.

A scenario provides at least two important services. First, it supplies a plausible starting point or setting for the exercise participants to examine particular challenges as well as responses to a crisis (e.g., hurricane, flooding, earthquake, explosion, cyberattack, workplace violence, contaminated products, etc.). One of the chief challenges in scenario development is to find out the real needs of the organization's key decision-makers. It's often the case that decision-makers do not know themselves what they need to know, or they may not know how to describe the information that they really want. We have learned that one simple way of overcoming this problem is simply to ask the client what concerns keep them up at night. Their nightmares are a good place to start scenario development.

A good exercise is designed so that decision-makers during the exercise will have every opportunity to apply their organization's plans, policies and procedures.

The organization is “stressed” by the realistically presented scenario as the exercise evolves and exercise participants will have to sift through the rapidly shifting information. Usually, particular groups of facts become more clearly important as the exercise unfolds forcing the various functional support departments/ stakeholders within the organizations to refine and repackage information to better serve the decision-makers’ needs. Frequently the exercise’s simulated time will run tens of times faster than real life, so decision-makers experience several days/months of policy decisions, and their simulated effects, in a few hours.

The second service the scenario provides is that it is a vehicle for your exercise injects – the information that’s injected during the exercise to advance the plot of the scenario. The injects will be detailed in the Master Scenario Events List (MSEL). We write the scenario (really a story line) completely with as much detail as possible and then select injects based on the story line as we put the game design and mechanics together.

A final note on scenario development: It is not uncommon for exercise participants to fight the scenario, perhaps believing it’s not credible. We emphasize that the scenario we are using, while not predictive, is in fact plausible and therefore valuable for examining the challenges it presents to the organization. The client knows more about its organization than most exercise developers, so it is important to have their input and constant review during the scenario development phase to strengthen plausibility.

MSEL Development:

The exercise facilitator and control team will control the exercise through the Master Scenario Events List (MSEL). The MSEL is the primary document used to conduct the exercise, providing the framework for monitoring and managing the flow of exercise activities. It shows when events are expected to occur and when to insert event-implementer messages into the exercise. The MSEL is not seen by exercise players but is used only by the facilitator, controllers, simulators and evaluators.

A MSEL lists all exercise communications and key events in a table.

In chronological sequence the MSEL specifies the time the message is expected to be delivered, who delivers it to whom, a message number, and a short description of the message. The MSEL identifies the timing and summary content of all key events, messages or injects, contingency messages, and can include anticipated responder actions for the duration of the exercise.

#	Actual Time	Sim Time	Inject	Type	Description	Recipient	Notes
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							

Injects are presented to the participants in varying formats during the course of the crisis simulation exercise. Formats might include simulated telephone calls, media reports (including videos), scripted text handouts, etc. Each inject included in the MSEL is intended to provide the participants in the exercise with information that should spur some form of action on their part. Ask the question as you develop the inject, “What are the expected action(s) that might occur when the participants receive this inject?” If you cannot answer the question, then you should reexamine and adjust the content within that inject.

Injects within the MSEL should not be considered as cast in stone but can be modified as necessary. At some point during the exercise the facilitator/control team may, for example, determine that the participants are on a path that will prevent them from achieving the stated objective(s) of the exercise. In that case, new or modified injects can be inserted to steer the participants back toward the objectives of the exercise organizations as identified in the scenario.



— CHAPTER FOUR

Exercise Development, Process and Evaluation

In this chapter we are going to discuss the exercise development, process and evaluation of the exercise. The tasks or responsibilities identified below can be accomplished by the organization alone or in coordination with an outside contracted exercise organization.

Exercise Development

During the course of preparing for the exercise, the “exercise coordinator,” that is, someone from within the organization, and the individual(s) designated or contracted to prepare and deliver the exercise, should be in constant contact to coordinate their actions. The exercise coordinator’s responsibilities include:

1. Creating a Design Document
2. Selecting Coordination and Design Teams
3. Determining Objectives and Issues
4. Determining the Scope and Extent of Play
5. Determining Means of Assessment/Evaluation
6. Establishing Work plan and Schedule
7. Determining Resource Requirements
8. Ensuring Senior Leadership Approval

The designated/contracted exercise design team will develop and execute the exercise. In the process they will:



1. Assist in the refinement of exercise objectives in coordination with the organization's exercise coordinator
2. Tailor the scenario to address stated exercise objectives
3. Develop Master Scenario Events List (MSEL)
4. Conduct periodic update meetings/conference calls with exercise coordinator
5. Develop exercise materials
6. Help conduct pre-exercise training sessions (as necessary)
7. Identify moderator(s) for breakout sessions during exercise
8. Ensure that evaluators of the exercise have complete package of information (e.g., exercise objectives, evaluation criteria developed for exercise, etc.) to do an effective job
9. Conduct the exercise and "Hot Wash," the debriefing held immediately following the exercise
10. In coordination with exercise coordinator develop After-Action Report (AAR) based on input from the "Hot Wash," observations from the "Control Team," and their own observations
11. Deliver the AAR within an agreed upon time as coordinated with exercise coordinator

Exercise Setup

An important step in conducting a successful exercise is to ensure that final preparations are made and thoroughly checked before the start of the exercise. These tasks include:

1. Identification of room(s) for exercise
2. Agenda finalized
3. Documents prepared (agenda, MSEL, selected hardcopy injects, participant exercise books, participant evaluations, evaluator checklist, copies of plans, etc.)
4. Participants identified
5. Moderator(s) identified
6. Recorder identified
7. Room setup
8. Communications access check [Telephone and Internet access (if required)]
9. Overhead projectors available and working
10. Exercise aids (whiteboards, flip charts, markers)
11. Breakout rooms identified and checked for communications and multi-media access
12. Refreshments



Exercise (Game) Process

We normally deliver the exercise with a presentation tool called “Prezi.” If there were to be external participation or need for observers to access the exercise, then Prezi would be made available online to those individuals.

The exercise is held in an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected. Participants are encouraged to treat the situations as real events and not challenge the storyline. The focus should be on the issues that emerge. The goal is to learn.

The exercise process uses an input-output paradigm.

Information (an inject) is presented to the participant or participant teams in varying formats during the course of the crisis simulation exercise. Teams then determine what courses of action (COA) to take, and then respond accordingly. The next inject(s) are then presented and the cycle continues until the exercise is completed. Participating teams and individuals may receive different information (injects) at different times.

Participating teams and individuals should coordinate, communicate and then respond based on their knowledge, training, and relevant documentation (i.e., plans, policies, and procedures). Exercise participants are reminded that decisions made within the exercise are not precedent setting and may not reflect their own organization's final position on a given issue.

Role-playing during exercises is frequently required to compensate for nonparticipating individuals or organizations. Although using "stand ins" detracts from realism, they provide the means to facilitate exercise play. They play two roles: (1) They can act as the outside world, e.g., news media; and (2) They are there to react to the players when the players are responding to exercise injects. If, for example, the crisis were a toxic release, someone could play the role of a scientist able to quantify the risk of the toxin to people. The biggest benefit of the role player is that it gives the exercise participants a person they can talk to who's a subject matter expert in a discipline pertinent to the exercise scenario.

During the course of the exercise, there will be times when an issue surfaces that cannot be resolved because of exercise time constraints. We define an "issue" as something whose resolution is important to the organization's crisis or business continuity plan, but that cannot be resolved during the time available for the exercise. These issues are placed on an "Issues Board" and are identified as gaps that need to be fully addressed and resolved at a later time (i.e., post-exercise). The issues are also included in the AAR. Players who are participating virtually from remote locations are given the opportunity to document their local issues throughout the simulation period. It is important that the exercise discussions are open and transparent so everyone can learn and benefit from any issues that are identified. Keep in mind that issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve response and preparedness efforts. Problem-solving should be the focus.

Exercise Debrief/Hot Wash

As mentioned earlier, the “hot wash,” another term borrowed from the military, is the “after-action” discussions and evaluations of an organization’s performance immediately following an exercise/war game, training session, or an actual major event, such as a Hurricane. Coming right on the heels of the exercise people’s thoughts are fresh and insightful and are therefore highly valuable to the organization’s preparedness.

The main purpose of a hot wash session is to identify strengths and weaknesses of the response to a given event. That information leads to another governmental phase known as “lessons learned” or perhaps better phrased as “lessons to be learned,” which is intended to guide future response direction in order to avoid repeating errors made in the past.

A hot wash normally includes all the parties that participated in the exercise or response activities. Their observations and discussion are used as part of the far more comprehensive After-Action Review. Unfortunately, many of the insights from an exercise that are highlighted during the “hot wash” are often forgotten following the exercise because no one volunteers to take responsibility or ownership of the issue identified during the game/exercise. We make it a practice to record each issue and highlight it during the “hot wash” while attempting to identify ownership of the challenge, i.e., who is responsible to work the challenge/problem. Another good technique to use during the “hot wash” is to go around the room/table and ask each exercise participant what insights they gained from the exercise. What are they going to do the first day following the exercise based on the issues identified during the “hot wash”?

Evaluation:

Exercise evaluators are provided a MSEL and will use it to assist in identifying events they must monitor closely. Evaluators should advise exercise controllers if they have not observed some expected action by the players. This activity will assist controllers in their exercise control function.

Exercise evaluators analyze data collected from the Hot Wash, Participant Feedback Forms, and compare actual results during the exercise with those criteria identified in other sources (e.g., plans, policies, and procedures, government regulations/standards, standards within the industry, and/or criteria developed for the exercise, etc.).



— ANOTHER PREPAREDEX SOLUTION

FIRSTLOOK

Created by Preparedex, Delivered by You

Need a little help? FirstLook is a self-guiding exercise package that contains a customized scenario and a self-evaluation report form.

Contact us for more info! <https://www.preparedex.com/services/firstlook/>



— CHAPTER FIVE

After Action Report and Summary

After-Action Report

An AAR is used to provide detailed feedback on the exercise. It summarizes exercise events and analyzes performance of the tasks identified as important during the planning process. It evaluates if exercise objectives had been achieved, and if not, why not. The AAR also reports on the overall crisis management capabilities of the organization and documents any gaps in plans, policies, and procedures.

To prepare the AAR, exercise evaluators analyze data collected from the hot wash, debrief, Participant Feedback Forms, and other sources (e.g., plans, policies, procedures, criteria developed for the exercise, standards within the industry, etc.) and compare actual results with the intended outcome. The level of detail in an AAR is based on the exercise type and scope. AAR conclusions are usually discussed and validated at an After-Action Conference that occurs within several weeks after the exercise is conducted.

The Exercise Playbook

What do you want to have in your exercise playbook or tool chest? We recommend these three basics to ensure your exercise success:

- Ask the Right Question
- Find the “MVP”
- The Right Type of Exercise

The Right Question

The first important tool in your chest is a question. It’s one question you will want to ask yourself, your colleagues, your Design Team, and others having a role in the exercise over and over again during the design process. This question will help you stay on track and keep your vision from start to finish. The question? “Why are we doing this exercise?” Don’t be turned off by the simplicity of that question; the answer holds the key to your exercise.

We have experienced through years of exercising that during the design process there were occasions when the exercise was in danger of deteriorating, for example, if it was starting to follow an individual’s more narrow agenda. When it seems like the exercise is heading in the wrong direction, we just ask this simple question: “Why are we doing this exercise?” The discussion that inevitably follows helps to make sure we deliver on the exercise objectives.



In addition, when embarking on the design process, this simple “why” question can help:

- Determine what type of exercise will likely deliver the best results.
- Develop the exercise goal, scope and objectives.
- Determine which narrative will yield those results.
- Keep you and the Design Team on track.

The Most Valuable People (MVP): The Design Team

Now that you know the simple, and yet powerful, question, you need to learn about the MVP in exercise design: the Design Team. Your Design Team has two main jobs – to validate and flesh out the narrative and to develop the injects. What makes an exercise hit home and be really effective is a narrative and highly specific injects (additional problems) tailored to your company.

In addition to helping you validate the narrative and develop the injects, there are additional benefits to having a Design Team:

The design process is a great way to bring more people “into the fold” and into your program. The Design Team members become believers. They tend to take ownership and share their belief with others.

The Design Team learns about the strengths and weaknesses of the processes and the plans.

What Makes a Good Exercise Design Team Member?

As you are reading this section, you might be getting an idea of who would make a good design team member. When picking Design Team members, look for the following skills:

- Creativity
- Meets or exceeds deadlines
- Detail-oriented
- Can think on their own
- Can keep a secret
- Are not on the exercise team



The Right Type of Exercise

Selecting the right type of exercise is important for your success. Try to always ask these three questions to help you decide which type is the best:

- The first question is always, “Why are we doing this?”
- Second question: “What is the maturity of our plan?”
- Third question: “What is the experience level of the team being exercised?”

Once you have the answers to those questions, you should be able to determine which exercise type will yield the best results:

- Orientation
- Drill
- Tabletop (basic or enhanced)
- Functional
- Full-scale

Exercise types can evolve over time. If possible, try to start a team with the most basic – orientation – and then progress them through the other styles. Fill your exercise chest with these powerful tools to mature and deepen your plans and your teams.

Exercise Process:

How you deliver the exercise is important. Ensuring that everyone is engaged throughout the session and that they receive the best training experience is important. If there is external participation or need for observers to access the exercise, then using online tools or exercise applications should be considered. If you decide to utilize any technology to support your exercise delivery, you need to ensure those tools are tested as part of your exercise rehearsal. You should also have a back-up plan which may include a power point slide deck.

The exercise is held in an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected. The main objective is learning.

Exercise Debrief and Evaluation:

To prepare the AAR, exercise evaluators analyze data collected from the hot wash, debrief, Participant Feedback Forms, and other sources (e.g., plans, policies, procedures, criteria developed for the exercise, standards within the industry, etc.) and compare actual results with the intended outcome. The level of detail in an AAR is based on the exercise type and scope. AAR conclusions are usually discussed and validated at an After-Action Conference that occurs within several weeks after the exercise is conducted.

Summary

Exercises are your “bridge” to an effective emergency management program. They are the way you train your staff, validate your plans, and have the confidence that your organization can successfully recover from a crisis. What we have observed in our years of professional practice is that although many organizations hold exercises – and the organizers may be emergency response subject matter experts – the organizers don’t necessarily excel in the discipline of conducting the actual exercises, which means the company simply doesn’t get the best results out of the effort. With a bit of careful planning, creativity and vision, you can develop not just a good exercise, but a great exercise, one that will really help you develop your program, build your plans, and mature your team.



PreparedEx

TESTIMONIAL

“As a fortune 500 company operating in all 48 states, we have to be resilient and prepared to handle a multitude of unplanned events which could potentially disrupt our operations. As such, in 2018 we partnered with PreparedEX in order to refine our crisis response protocols and develop several crisis scenario exercises to test our ability to respond to disruptive events. PreparedEX provided a knowledgeable, professional and extremely flexible approach to reviewing our crisis response plans, offering sage advice where needed. Separately, they developed three separate exercise scenarios which were subsequently delivered to regional and corporate personnel which directly assessed the Company’s ability to respond to large scale disruptions. Feedback from all participants was powerful. PreparedEX did a fantastic job researching our organization and culture to create realistic scenarios for the exercises, which in turn generated tremendous learning opportunities and awareness for our employees. More importantly, the experience displayed our strengths and highlighted areas for improvement which ultimately made us stronger and more durable. This preparation paid dividends when we experienced two major hurricane events in 2018. When it really mattered, our crisis response protocols worked seamlessly and allowed us to keep our employees and assets safe while avoiding any major disruptions. Through preparedness and planning, we essentially converted a disruption into an opportunity. It is my professional opinion, this would not have occurred without our partnership with PreparedEX. In the end, we navigated the hurricanes without incident. We lost zero assets, experienced zero injuries, and were first back to market in all of our operating areas. Moving forward, we fully intend to continue this great partnership with PreparedEX.”

- Vice President, Corporate Security at Large Disposal Company

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