



Pandemic Response Exercise



Situation Manual
Tabletop Exercise (TTX)
March 27, 2020

Preface

The Pandemic Response TTX Exercise is sponsored by the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services – Division of Public Health (ADHSS-DPH) and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC). This Situation Manual (SitMan) was produced with input, advice, and assistance from the Exercise Participant Planning Team members, which followed guidance set forth by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). This exercise will bring together local, state, and federal sector stakeholders in response to a local health threat within the State of Alaska.

This SitMan provides exercise participants with all the necessary tools for their roles in the exercise.

This Exercise is unclassified. The scenario is hypothetical but based on the latest information regarding the spread of COVID-19 within Alaska. Control of exercise information is based on public sensitivity regarding the nature of the exercise and potential law enforcement sensitive discussions during the exercise rather than actual SitMan content. All exercise participants may view the SitMan.

All exercise participants should use appropriate guidelines to ensure proper control of information within their areas of expertise and protect this material in accordance with current organizational directives. Public release of exercise materials to third parties is at the discretion of ADHSS-DPH and the Exercise Planning Team.

Administrative Handling Instructions

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Section 1: Exercise Overview

Background

The Pandemic Response Exercise is a discussion-based Table Top Exercise designed to evaluate common target capabilities associated with the planning and response of a suspected or real pandemic event and to mutually enhance incident management and community response to a potentially large scale health emergency affecting local or multiple communities.

Alaska is unique – in diversity and frequency of disaster events, and in disaster response, management, resource availability, and capabilities of local, state, and federal organizations resident in the State. Alaska’s unusual geographical regions create potential challenges for coordinating state resources to support a suitable response at the local level. This exercise provides an opportunity to plan, train, and exercise together and serves to strengthen these organizational ties and prepare organizations and their leadership for coordinated, effective disaster response and recovery.

The desired outcome is to 1) recognize the complexities involved in a statewide response by Federal, State, local communities, and key partners to a pandemic threat and 2) identify the potential gaps in planning, processes, and resource expectations related to response requirements. Achieving the desired results will inform the coordinated response on the ground with the work of the SEOC in responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Purpose

The purpose of this Pandemic Response TTX is to facilitate the ongoing planning and local staff capacity to improve response to the COVID-19 Pandemic which requires multi agency collaboration in your community and/or the surrounding villages.

Scope

These exercise discussions should provide participants with a venue to evaluate:

- Initial event notifications and communication to providers and community for prevention/mitigation
- What communication methods are in place in your community?
- Who, what, when and how will communication take place internally and externally with your community, villages and partner organizations?
- Assessing organizational capabilities/needs and available resources
- Coordinating resource requests and tracking critical personnel. PPE and supplies
- What is the strategy if symptomatic people are now in the community or communities?
- What is the strategy if a positive case is now in the community or communities?
- Mass fatality concerns
- Obstacles and challenges to coordinated effective response

Confidentiality

This exercise is *For Official Use Only (FOUO)*. The need to control this information is based more on public sensitivity regarding the nature of the exercise than on the actual content. This document may be viewed by all exercise participants. Public release of exercise materials to third parties is at the discretion of the Exercise Planning Team members.

Target Capabilities

The national planning scenarios and establishment of the national preparedness goals have steered the focus of homeland security toward a capabilities-based planning approach.

Capabilities-based planning takes an all-hazards approach to planning and preparation that builds capabilities that can be applied to a wide variety of incidents. Capabilities-based planning identifies gaps in current capabilities and focuses efforts on identifying and developing priority capabilities and tasks.

The capabilities listed here have been selected by the exercise planning team from the priority capabilities identified in Alaska's multiyear training and exercise plan. These capabilities provide the foundation for development of the exercise design objectives and the scenario. The selected target capabilities are:

- Community Preparedness
- Emergency Operations Coordination
- Information Sharing/ Operational Communications (internal and external)
- Responder Health and Safety
- Medical Surge
- Public Health Surveillance and Epidemiological Investigation

Exercise Design Objectives

The exercise is designed to draw participants into a plausible scenario and assess both individual organization and interagency capabilities and challenges with respect to the following objectives.

Capability-Specific Objectives:

HSEEP Capabilities:

- a. Planning
- b. Public Health, Healthcare, and Medical Services
- c. Operational Coordination
- d. Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- e. Operational Communications

PHEP Capabilities:

- a. Community Preparedness
- b. Emergency Operations Coordination
- c. Medical Surge
- d. Information Sharing
- e. Non-pharmaceutical Interventions

Objectives:

Objectives have been developed by the planning team as follows:

- a. Understand agency/staff roles and responsibilities for notification, plan implementation and response management (ICS).
- b. Assess and evaluate communication pathways and information flow among staff and partner agencies at the various levels

- c. Understand resource requirements, logistics and resupply process
- d. Discuss and document “what if” possibilities during operations
- e. Outline areas for improved planning, training and implementation

Participants

- **Players:** Staff is asked to respond to questions about the situation based on knowledge of organizational response capabilities and procedures, current plans, and leadership directives.
- **Controller/Evaluators (Scribe):** are typically chosen from amongst planning committee members or the agencies/organizations that are participating in the exercise.

Injects: None planned.

The following table lists the agencies participating in exercise

Participating Agencies	
Local	
YK Hospital First Responders (EMS/Law Enforcement) Emergency Managers School	Faith Based Organizations Critical Industry (stores/utilities etc.) Elected Officials Volunteer Organizations
State	
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services-Division of Public Health (ADHSS-DPH) Public Health Center	National Guard
Federal	

Exercise Structure

This is a facilitated discussion based TTX designed to allow staff to discuss assigned roles, responsibilities and concerns when considering the scenario, communications and/or while interacting with fellow participants. The lessons learned from this exercise can serve as an effective tool to improve planning, preparedness/response, and will:

- Focus on existing plans, policies, agreements and procedures.
- Enhance general awareness, validate plans and procedures, and/or assess the types of systems needed to guide response and recovery from a defined event.
- Facilitate an understanding of concepts, how response operations are coordinated, identify strengths and shortfalls, and help achieve greater understanding of your role and responsibilities; and
- Serve as a forum for updating current or developing new plans and procedures.

- Moderators are free to edit discussion questions.

Exercise Rules

The following are the general rules that govern exercise play:

- This is a safe environment to discuss both process strengths and weaknesses and learn from each other
- Identify gaps and strengths of the plans and systems rather than individual knowledge
- Please accept the scenario ‘as is’
- Not all issues will be resolved today
- Be considerate of others
- Keep side conversations to a minimum

Assumptions and Artificialities

In any exercise, assumptions and artificialities may be necessary to complete play in the time allotted. During this exercise, the following apply:

- The scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented.
- Assume cooperation and support from other responders and agencies.
- All players receive information at the same time
- Exercise participants will react to the information and situations as they are presented.

Safety Requirements

General

Safety takes priority over all Exercise events. The following general requirements apply to the exercise:

- **All participants are responsible for safety.**
- Participants will be responsible for their own and each other’s safety during the Exercise. It is the responsibility of all persons associated with the Exercise to stop play if, in their opinion, a real safety problem exists. Once the problem is corrected, the Exercise can be restarted.
- All participants will comply with their respective environmental, health, and safety plans and procedures, as well as the appropriate Federal, State, and local environmental health and safety regulations.

Cleanup and Restoration: N/A

Drill Participants Briefing: N/A

Public Affairs: N/A

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Section 2: Scenario

Background

During the month of December, 2019, a new novel Coronavirus was being experienced in Wuhan China. It quickly spread to other countries in Europe. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) are monitoring this rapidly escalating event. The CDC anticipates that it would be a matter of time before it arrived in the United States due to repatriation of citizens and/or tourists returning to the US from vacations. The CDC is asking State Government and Public Health officials to work with all jurisdictions within their state to begin evaluating what resources and supplies they have available and to anticipate what they may need in order to prepare for what could impact their communities.

In January of 2020, the COVID-19 is occurring in additional countries in Europe as well as states of the lower 48. Due to the widespread occurrence nationally, the CDC has now declared COVID-19 to be a Pandemic. As of March 27, 2020, Alaska has had 70+ cases of COVID-19 in several communities. State and local public health centers, medical providers and partnering agencies are being asked to prepare for surge capacity of ill individuals within the communities.

April 1st, there are travelers that are now returning home to your community from Europe or from other states in the lower 48, that are becoming ill. After a few weeks, your hospital and/or clinics are becoming overwhelmed with many patients/clients/employees that have now begun having similar symptoms. Many are being hospitalized in severe respiratory distress or being transferred to a higher level of care facility in Anchorage. Lab specimens have been sent to the state lab for analysis. Three people have died from the illness. Your community is now considering a disaster declaration due to health and medical needs.

The lab specimen results were received by The Section of Epidemiology who then notified the local Public Health Center and Regional Hospital. The results revealed that the area now has cases of COVID-19. Additionally, the contact investigation is pointing to potential positives in some of the surrounding rural villages.

What resources has your community used and what still is the need? Who, where and when would communicate needs and requests to?

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APPENDIX A: Acronyms

ADHSS	Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
AKST	Alaska Standard Time
AKNG	Alaska National Guard
ANTHC	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
ARES	Amateur Radio Emergency Service
AST	Alaska State Troopers
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CME	Community Medical Emergency
CST	Civil Support Team (NG)
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Services
DHS&EM	Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
DMVA	Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, State of Alaska
DPH	Division of Public Health
DOD	Department of Defense
DOT	Department of Transportation
DSNS	Division of Strategic National Stockpile
EMS	Emergency Medical Service
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IAP	Incident Action Plan
ICS	Incident Command System
HICS	Hospital Incident Command System
HPP	Hospital Preparedness Program
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
LEPC	Local Emergency Planning Committee
MAC	Multi-Agency Coordination
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NRF	National Response Framework
PIO	Public Information Officer
POC	Point Of Contact

POD	Point of Dispensing
RFA	Request for Assistance
RSS	Receipt, Stage and Store Warehouse
SEOC	State Emergency Operations Center
SitMan	Situation Manual
SOPHN	Section of Public Health Nursing
SME	Subject Matter Expert
TCL	Target Capabilities List
TTX	Tabletop Exercise

APPENDIX B: Exercise Design and Conduct Feedback

Participant Feedback Form

Exercise Name: "Pandemic Response Table Top Exercise"
Date: March 27, 2020

Participant Name: _____

Participant Title: _____

Agency: _____

Role: _____ Participant _____ Evaluator _____ Observer _____

1. Part 1—Recommendations and Action Steps

1. Based on today's activities list the top three issues and/or areas that need improvement:

2. Identify the action steps that should be taken to address the issues identified above. For each action step, indicate if it is a high, medium or low priority:

3. Describe the action steps that should be taken in your area of responsibility. Who should be assigned responsibility for each action item?

2. Part 2 – Exercise Design and Conduct

1. What is your assessment of the exercise design and conduct?

Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, your overall assessment of the exercise relative to the statements provided below, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement.

Assessment Factor	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The exercise was well structured and organized	1	2	3	4	5
The time allotted for the exercise was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic	1	2	3	4	5
The scenario adequately set the stage for activities and decisions to be acted upon	1	2	3	4	5
The background information was useful	1	2	3	4	5
The SITMAN used during the exercise was a valuable tool throughout the exercise	1	2	3	4	5
Participation in the exercise was appropriate for someone in my position	1	2	3	4	5
The participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines	1	2	3	4	5
The information exchanged during the exercise discussion-based tabletop exercise was of high quality	1	2	3	4	5
The exercise activities stayed focused and on track	1	2	3	4	5
I will use knowledge gained at this exercise to suggest ways that my organization can improve its emergency planning activities	1	2	3	4	5
As a participant of my organization, I had a clear understanding of the role my organization should play if called upon under the scenario presented	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident in my organization's ability to perform its designated duties in a public health emergency	1	2	3	4	5

2. What changes would you make to improve this exercise?

Please provide any recommendations on how the exercise could be improved or enhanced to better prepare emergency responders to safely and effectively respond to such a public health emergency.

3. Should this group reconvene at a future date? _____yes _____no

If yes, do you have any comments or suggestions for a future agenda?

Thank you for your participation, comments and time