NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
Tabletop Exercise Toolkit

Facilitator Guide
Steam Pipe Rupture, Response Phase

Version 1.0

STEAM PIPE RUPTURE RESPONSE SCENARIO

Congratulations, you have been identified as the facilitator for the upcoming tabletop exercise. Whether this is your first time as a facilitator or you have experience, please use this document to help guide you through this process. Thank you for taking on this important role on behalf of the organization.

Before you continue, make sure you are familiar with the scope and objectives set by the organizers and planning team for the tabletop exercise. If those have not yet been identified, please refer to the Organizer's Guide for assistance.

This scenario, based on a fictional steam pipe rupture on the block of your primary facility, is designed to test your initial response to a no-notice incident. At the start of the incident, participants must deal with initial reactions, as well incomplete information and uncertainty about safety conditions. As the scenario continues, the focus shifts to business continuity concerns. This scenario does not cover the recovery phase; that will be the subject of a forthcoming scenario.

This Facilitator Guide contains the text that will appear on the PowerPoint. Certain slides also include questions that you may use to encourage discussion. The questions are categorized based on the business continuity function to which they pertain, as a way to help you steer discussion to areas relevant to your participants and exercise objectives. Not all of these questions will be relevant to your organization or to the particular participants. Additionally, in some cases, you may want to re-word the questions to prompt the participants to identify the problems that the questions address.

FACILITATOR **G**UIDE

Introduction

This facilitator manual contains some background about tabletop exercises, suggestions for how to run a successful tabletop exercise, as well as the current exercise scenario with possible questions to encourage discussion, and notes detailing the purpose of certain slides.

Background

What is a Tabletop Exercise?

A tabletop exercise is a facilitated discussion of a plan in an informal, stress-free environment. It is like a problem-solving or brainstorming session where participants share capabilities and solve problems as a group based on their organization's existing plans and the determined objectives of the exercise.

The success of a tabletop exercise is determined by feedback from participants and the impact the feedback has on the evaluation and revision of policies, plans, and procedures.

What a Tabletop Exercise is Not

A tabletop exercise is neither the tool through which you make a plan nor the place for training and discussion about a plan. A prior step to holding a tabletop exercise is often a workshop to train and discuss a plan. This toolkit is meant to be used once your organization has a plan in place and is ready to evaluate it.

Why Run a Tabletop Exercise?

Tabletop exercises build organizational capacity, help organizations evaluate their business continuity plans and identify strengths and areas for improvement. These exercises provide training and awareness to staff who have an opportunity to rehearse their roles and responsibilities during an incident. Plus, they are low-cost and low-stakes.

How Long is a Tabletop Exercise?

A tabletop exercise usually lasts from 1 to 4 hours, but can vary depending on the incident. Discussion times are open-ended, and participants are encouraged to take their time in arriving at in-depth decisions without time pressure. When the time is up, the activity is concluded.

There is never a perfect moment to run a tabletop exercise for everyone, but try to do so at a time that doesn't compete for everyone's attention.

Facilitating a Tabletop Exercise

The facilitator has a number of responsibilities, including:
- Introducing the narrative
- Encouraging problem solving
- Controlling the pace and flow of the exercise
- Stimulating discussion and drawing answers and solutions from the group (rather than supplying them)

Setting the Stage

The opening remarks and activities influence the whole exercise experience. Participants need to know what to expect, and to feel comfortable about being participants. Consider including the following elements at the start of your exercise:
- Begin by sincerely welcoming participants and putting them at ease.
- Brief the participants about what will happen. This should include a clear explanation of the exercise's purpose and objectives, agenda, ground rules, and procedures.
- Start the exercise by reading (or having someone read) the first two slides of background information.
- Try breaking the ice by beginning with a general question directed at one or two high-ranking individuals or to the group as a whole. Later, other questions can be addressed to other individuals.

Ways to Involve All Participants

It is important that everyone participates and that no one person dominates the discussion. Tips for involving all of the participants are summarized below:
- Give extra encouragement to those who are a little tentative.
- Recognize that junior staff might be hesitant to comment in front of senior management.
- Avoid the temptation to jump in with the right solutions when participants are struggling. This can hamper discussion. Instead, try to draw out answers from participants. They will be more likely to participate if they feel people are listening intently and sympathetically.
- Model and encourage the behaviors you want from participants.
- Make eye contact with participants.
- Acknowledge comments in a positive manner.

Controlling and Sustaining the Action

To maintain a high level of interest and to keep everyone involved, the facilitator needs to control and sustain the action. There are several ways to do this.

- Vary the pace. Give messages at different rates, perhaps even giving two at once to increase pace and interest.
- Maintain a balance between overly talking about a problem to death and moving along so fast that nothing gets settled. Don't hesitate to control the exercise tightly.
- Watch for signs of frustration or conflict. Always remember that the tabletop is an opportunity to evaluate your plan in a no-fault environment and gaps should be expected. People may be sensitive or inexperienced. If you see mounting frustration or conflict, stop the exercise. Reach into your experience as a discussion leader to help participants resolve conflicts and feel comfortable.
- Keep it low-key. Avoid a bad experience by keeping in mind the low-key nature of the tabletop.
- If you spend all of your time on one big problem, maintain interest among participants, and reach consensus, then the tabletop can be considered a success. Push the participants past superficial solutions. A few carefully chosen, open-ended questions can keep the discussion going to a logical conclusion.
- Remember that not everyone will be equally knowledgeable about the plan that is being evaluated.


Note: The point is not to debate or discuss the City's response; the key is to be aware of the response and see how they impact your organization's response.

Using the Possible Questions

The questions that accompany the following scenario slides cover a broad range of plan components that can be evaluated. It is recommended that only the questions relevant to the tabletop exercise's scope and purpose be discussed. Not every question needs to be asked, and each scenario can be used multiple times to test different components of your plan. For example, if the goal is to evaluate the organization's communications strategy, it may not be necessary to ask participants about operating from a backup facility. Use your best judgement when deciding what questions to ask. Facilitator notes are also included on some of the slides to help you better understand the context.

Scenario Slides & Possible Questions
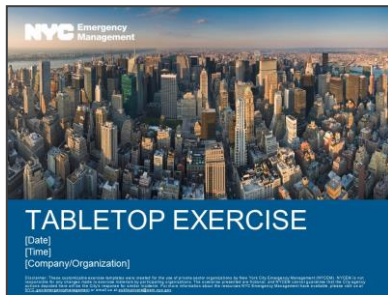
1 | Tabletop Exercise

Disclaimer: These customizable exercise templates were created for the use of private sector organizations by the New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM). NYCEM is not responsible for any changes made to exercise materials by participating organizations. The scenarios presented are fictional, and NYCEM cannot guarantee that the City agency actions depicted here will be the City's response for similar incidents. For more information about the resources NYC Emergency Management have available, please visit us at NYC.gov/emergencymanagement or email us at publicprivate@oem.nyc.gov.

---
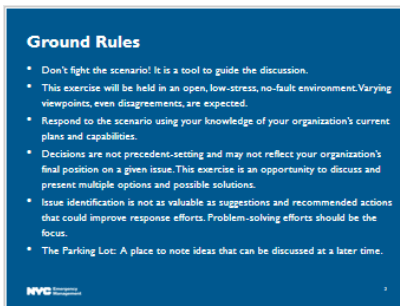
2 | Ground Rules

Don't fight the scenario! It is a tool to guide the discussion.

This exercise will be held in an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected. Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of your organization's current plans and capabilities.

Decisions are not precedent-setting and may not reflect your organization's final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions.

Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve response efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus. The Parking Lot: A place to note ideas that can be discussed at a later time.

Facilitator Notes:
- Make sure to explain in basic terms what a tabletop exercise is and how it works.
- Gently explain why the parking lot exists and the importance of keeping the conversation on track.

---

3 | Background, Tuesday Morning, 9:30 AM

It is a sunny Tuesday morning in New York City and business activities for the week are in full swing. Most employees have already arrived, though there are a few late arrivals who haven't yet reported in. Several employees are out of the office at meetings in other parts of the city. One of the employees, Anna, announces that she is going next door on a coffee run and asks if anybody wants anything. Two other employees, Bob and Charles, decide to go with her.

4 Boom! Tuesday Morning, 9:42 AM

At 9:42, there is a low rumbling noise, about the volume of a truck passing by. The building shakes slightly, enough for people to look up from what they are doing. Several seconds later, there is a loud boom, followed by screams from outside on the street. The building shakes noticeably but, with the exception of a painting falling off the wall, there appears to be no immediate impact to your floor. A cloud of dust rises up past the windows facing the street, and a car alarm goes off outside.

Facilitator Notes:
- This slide sets the scene. Advance to Slide #4 to discuss initial reactions.

---

5 Initial Reactions; Tuesday Morning, 9:45 AM

Employee reactions:
What was that? Is it a terrorist attack / bomb / earthquake? Are we safe here? Should we leave?
Your reactions:
<u>All of the above</u>, and… How do you answer these initial questions/concerns? Where are you getting your information from?

Facilitator Notes:
- Managers have to simultaneously consider their own concerns and fears as well as how to direct and lead their employees during emergencies.
- Participants should consider where they are getting information from. Some expected sources include notification systems, news outlets, social media, and upper management. Are these sources vetted and how does information get passed along in your organization?

Possible Questions for ALL
- What is your initial response? Do you have enough information to act?
- Will some of your employees self-evacuate immediately? Why might you not want employees to evacuate if you have incomplete information?
- What does your Emergency Action Plan say about situations like this?
- What do you know now? Do you have enough information to act? Do you know whether it is safe to evacuate? Do you know whether it is safe to stay?
- Can you take any immediate actions to make your environment safer?
- What can be done about Bob, Charles, and Anna, who are now missing—does anything need to be done? If so, who should do it?

6 Did You See That? Tuesday Morning, 9:50 AM
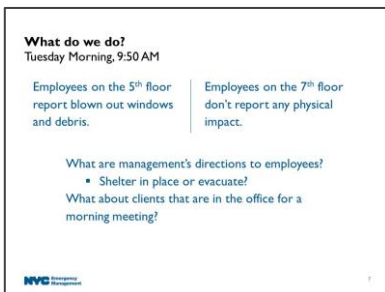*Slides #5 to #7 happen simultaneously at 9:50 AM.*
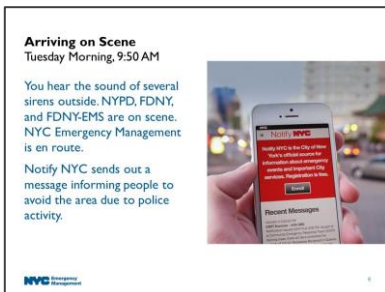
7 Arriving on Scene; Tuesday Morning, 9:50 AM
Slides #5 to #7 happen simultaneously at 9:50 AM.
You hear the sound of several sirens outside. NYPD, FDNY, and FDNY-EMS are on scene. Emergency Management is en route. Notify NYC sends out a message informing people to avoid the area due to police activity.

Facilitator Notes:
- Notify NYC is the City of New York's official source for information about emergency events and important City services. Alerts from Notify NYC comes directly from NYC Emergency Management's 24/7 Watch Command, which monitors emergency activity in NYC and the metropolitan area. Participants can sign up at NYC.gov/notifynyc.

8 What do we do? Tuesday Morning, 9:50 AM
Slides #5 to #7 happen simultaneously at 9:50 AM.
Employees on the 5th floor report blown out windows and debris.
Employees on the 7th floor don't report any physical impact.
What are management's directions to employees?
Shelter in place or evacuate?
What about clients that are in the office for a morning meeting?

Facilitator Notes:
- Circumstances of an incident may differ based on proximity or location. Management should consider whether an internal relocation is necessary or possible.
- Based on the information provided thus far, an in-building relocation for those in hazardous areas (e.g. 5th floor) would make sense rather than a full building evacuation.

Possible Questions for SECURITY and CRISIS MANAGEMENT
- How will you communicate with law enforcement officials?

- What directions, if any, do you give employees and clients? And if so, how will you communicate this to them and who is responsible for this?
- How and from where do you get additional information?
- Are any employees signed up for NotifyNYC?

---
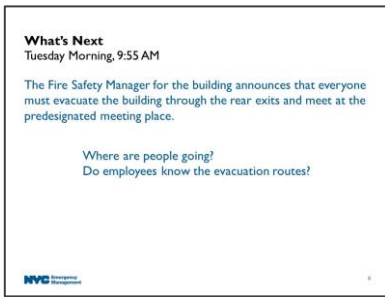
9 What's Next; Tuesday Morning, 9:55 AM
The Fire Safety Manager for the building announces that everyone must evacuate the building through the rear exits and meet at the predesignated meeting place.
Where are people going? Do employees know the evacuation routes?

Facilitator Notes:
- Once the Fire Safety Manager announces the evacuation, this is when you and your employees should evacuate.

Possible Questions for SECURITY and CRISIS MANAGEMENT
- Have you tested all of your evacuation routes to make sure that they all work?
- Are employees familiar with the evacuation routes?
- Do you have a rally point for evacuations?
- Is your rally point far enough from your building that it will still work if your block is inaccessible (or do you have a secondary rally point that is far enough away)?
- If you are a tenant in a larger building, have you communicated/coordinated your evacuation plans with your building management?
- Have you communicated with other tenants in your building to resolve evacuation conflicts?
- Do your employees have go-bags?

---
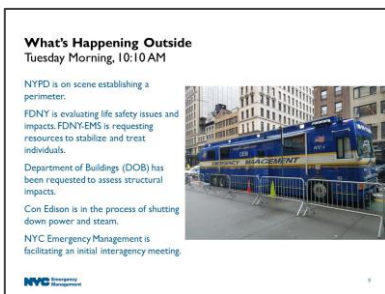
10 What's Happening Outside? Tuesday Morning, 10:10 AM
NYPD is on scene establishing a perimeter.
FDNY is evaluating life safety issues and impacts. FDNY-EMS is requesting resources to stabilize and treat individuals.
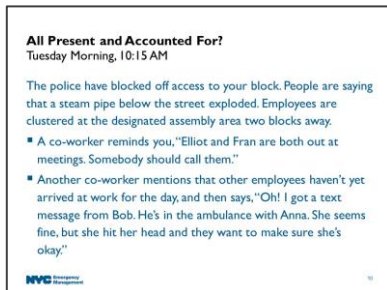Department of Buildings (DOB) has been requested to assess structural impacts.
Con Edison is in the process of shutting down power and steam.
NYC Emergency Management is facilitating an initial interagency meeting.

Facilitator Notes:

- This slide is to inform you about the City's actions so that the external response is not debated by the exercise participants, but rather allows the participants to focus on the organization's response to the incident.
- Participants should be aware that they may not know these actions are taking place. Slide #11 will explain how the City will communicate these actions to the private sector.

All Present and Accounted For?
Tuesday Morning, 10:15 AM

The police have blocked off access to your block. People are saying that a steam pipe below the street exploded. Employees are clustered at the designated assembly area two blocks away.

- A co-worker reminds you, "Elliot and Fran are both out at meetings. Somebody should call them."
- Another co-worker mentions that other employees haven't yet arrived at work for the day, and then says, "Oh! I got a text message from Bob. He's in the ambulance with Anna. She seems fine, but she hit her head and they want to make sure she's okay."

11 All Present and Accounted for? Tuesday Morning, 10:15 AM

The police have blocked off access to your block. People are saying that a steam-pipe below the street exploded. Employees are clustered at the designated assembly area two blocks away.

A co-worker reminds you, "Elliot and Fran are both out at meetings. Somebody should call them."
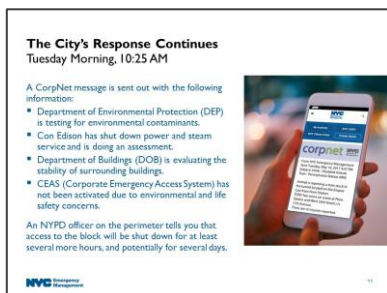
Another co-worker mentions that other employees haven't yet arrived at work for the day, and then says, "Oh! I got a text message from Bob. He's in the ambulance with Anna. She seems fine, but she hit her head and they want to make sure she's okay."

Possible Questions for ALL

- How does the evacuation impact your business operations and responsibilities?
- What will the organization do for the rest of the day?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES and CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Do you have a method set up for calling employees?
- Whose job is it to call people or send out a message to account for all employees?
- Who manages the calls/notifications to executives?
- Do you have a protocol for sending someone to the hospital with an injured employee?
- Who is at the designated meeting place with employees?

The City's Response Continues
Tuesday Morning, 10:25 AM

A CorpNet message is sent out with the following information:
- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is testing for environmental contaminants.
- Con Edison has shut down power and steam service and is doing an assessment.
- Department of Buildings (DOB) is evaluating the stability of surrounding buildings.
- CEAS (Corporate Emergency Access System) has not been activated due to environmental and life safety concerns.

An NYPD officer on the perimeter tells you that access to the block will be shut down for at least several more hours, and potentially for several days.

12 The City's Response Continues; Tuesday Morning, 10:25 AM

A CorpNet message is sent out with the following information:
Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is testing for environmental contaminants. Con Edison has shut down power and steam service and is doing an assessment.
Department of Buildings (DOB) is evaluating the stability of surrounding buildings. CEAS (Corporate Emergency Access System) has not been activated due to environmental and life safety concerns.

An NYPD officer on the perimeter tells you that access to the block will be shut down for at least several more hours, and potentially for several days.

Facilitator Notes:
- The CorpNet program is managed by NYC Emergency Management and provides business partners with current, accurate information about emergencies to enhance awareness and aid decision making, should their businesses be affected. Businesses can enroll at PrivateSector.NYC.
- Some of the information conveyed by the CorpNet message was noted in Slide #9, but you will likely not be made aware of it until the City communicates it through CorpNet and other communication channels.
- The information regarding the block closure came from a single NYPD officer. Management needs to verify and confirm this information before communicating it to employees and executives.

Possible Questions for ALL
- Do you and your employees have access to business email from off-site?
- Do you have a vendor/supplier contact list that you can access remotely if you need to use it?

*Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES*
- Does the business have somebody who will talk to employees who may be traumatized by an event?
- Who stays with the building to give/gather information to/from first responders?

Possible Questions for MANAGEMENT
- What will you tell your employees about working for the rest of the day? For tomorrow?

Possible Questions for SECURITY and CRISIS MANAGEMENT
- Are any employees signed up for CorpNet?

---
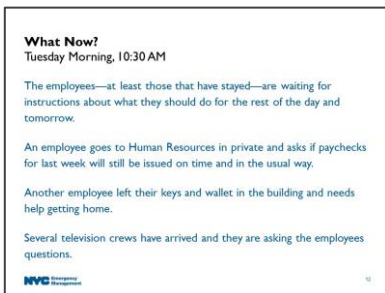
13 | What Now? Tuesday Morning, 10:30 AM

The employees—at least those that have stayed—are waiting for instructions about what they should do for the rest of the day and tomorrow.

An employee goes to Human Resources in private and asks if paychecks for last week will still be issued on time and in the usual way.

Another employee left their keys and wallet in the building and needs help getting home.

Several television crews have arrived and they are asking the employees questions.

Note:
- Not everyone is going to be at the gathering spot. Is there a plan to find the locations of those not present?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES, CRISIS MANAGEMENT, and SECURITY

- Will you be able to tell who among your employees is present, who is out of the office on business, who is either not in today or arriving late, and who is missing? Can you get in touch with all of the above individuals? When you do get in touch with them, what will you tell them?
- Do you have a call-down tree or another form of emergency contact system in place already?
- Do you need to worry about Bob and Anna?
- Can you help your employees get home if they are missing items (e.g., phone, wallet, etc.?)
- Do you have policies in place permitting employees to work from home?
- Do you have an alternate work site?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES

- Will you be able to pay your employees without access to your primary facility?
- How will you track time and hours worked for your employees if they are working from home?

Possible Questions for CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- How will you communicate with responders?

Possible Questions for IT

- Do you have policies in place permitting employees to work from home? If so, will your employees actually be able to work from home? Have you tested the technology? Have employees ever practiced working from home in non-emergency situations to ensure that everything functions properly?

*Possible Questions for FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION*

- Will you be able to pay your employees without access to your primary facility?
- Will you be able to carry out other vital accounting and financial functions without access to your primary facility?

Possible Questions for PUBLIC RELATIONS and MANAGEMENT

- Do you need to appoint a spokesperson to talk to the media?

Possible Questions for LEGAL

- Are there policies in place about employees interacting with media?
- What are your organization's legal policies regarding accountability of personnel?
- Are there any workers compensation policies and procedures that need to be taken into account for injured employees?
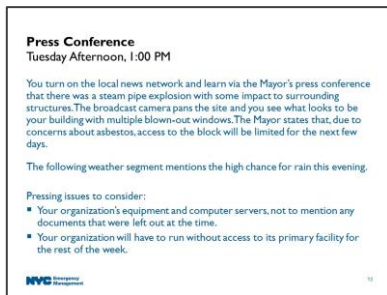
14 Press Conference; Tuesday Afternoon, 1:00 PM

You turn on the local news network and learn via the Mayor's press conference that there was a steam pipe explosion with some impact to surrounding structures. The broadcast camera pans the site and you see what looks to be your building with multiple blown-out windows. The following weather segment mentions the high chance for rain this evening.

Pressing issues to consider: Your organization's equipment and computer servers, not to mention any documents that were left out at the time. Your organization will have to run without access to its primary facility for the rest of the week.

Possible Questions for ALL
- Do you back up your important documents and store them off-site?
- Do you back up your computer data? Will you be able to access the backed-up information?
- What will you be missing and how will it affect your ability to do business?
- How will you run your business if you cannot access your primary facility for several days? Who will you need to call? Will you be able to get in touch with them?

Possible Questions for CRISIS MANAGEMENT
- How will you maintain contact with your employees?
- What parts of your business can you suspend or postpone?
- What aspects of your business must you continue?
- Do you know what your organization's insurance policies cover? Who is in charge of liaising with the insurance company?

Possible Questions for FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION
- Do you have business interruption insurance? If so, would your coverage apply to this situation?
- Will you be able to call your insurance company from off-site?
- Do you have copies of your policies off-site?
- Are you covered for physical damage to your equipment?

Possible Questions for HUMAN RESOURCES
- How will you maintain contact with your employees?
- What will your policy be regarding having employees return to work?
- How will you treat staff members who have been told not to report to work or to work from home? Will they get paid? Do they have vacation or sick time to use?

Possible Questions for MANAGEMENT
- How will you maintain contact with your employees?
- What parts of your business can you suspend or postpone?
- What aspects of your business must you continue?

15 **Moving Forward**

For exercise purposes, this marks the end of the immediate response to the steam pipe rupture incident. As response transitions to recovery, your organization may have to consider issues such as client contact, damage assessment, continuity operations, and the insurance adjustment process.

This recovery phase will be the subject of a forthcoming scenario in NYC Emergency Management's Tabletop Exercise Toolkit.

For more information about the resources NYC Emergency Management have available, please visit us at NYC.gov/emergencymanagement or email us at publicprivate@oem.nyc.gov.

---

16 **Thank you**