



***BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TABLETOP EXERCISE
JULY 13, 2005
EMBASSY SUITES HOTEL OMAHA, NEBRASKA***

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EXPECTATIONS, PURPOSE AND WHY WE EXERCISE

No one can ever be completely prepared for each and every emergency that we face. We can however prepare and plan for the unthinkable. Regardless of the emergency many of the activities and functions that take place immediately afterwards are commonly the same. By preparing for one emergency you will find that you better equip yourself and others for incidents to come.

It is extremely important to remember that when you exercise you look at plans and procedures and not at individuals. When plans and procedures are developed it is important to take them and incorporate them in exercises. Exercises are designed to find holes or short comings in plans. Many times there are simply steps that we simply do not think about until questions are asked. The intention is to fix these plans and identify potential problems before an actual incident occurs.

The reason for today's exercise is to gain a better understanding of the emergency exercise and preparedness functions. There are many resources available through the state and local jurisdictions. We hope that through today's activities you can identify needs and resources that are available to you locally and through state and federal agencies. It is important that we focus on who we need to contact, what our primary functions are and how we document and identify those in need of our services.

Today's exercise was developed as a stepping stone for you to take back to your communities and hopefully develop into an exercise that is more specifically geared towards your local jurisdiction. We want to identify what needs to be done and resources to successfully complete those tasks.

This is a no fault exercise. There are no wrong answers and if we do not have the answer today we will work hard towards finding the answer and hopefully the best solution to the problem. This activity requires group participation and is intended to assist you in further development of your behavioral health plans and procedures. Your feed back and thoughts are requested to better develop our exercises and programs.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOALS: As a result of this exercise, the participants will

- Understand the basics of the Regional Behavioral Health Response and Recovery Plans
- Understand how the Behavioral Health Response Officials coordinate with local emergency response personal and Public Health District Response Plans

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify who is responsible for both short term, and long term behavioral health operations at the local, regional and state levels.
- Understand what local/regional Behavioral Health Response means (How do I do it? Where do I go? Who do I report to?)
- Identify where Behavioral Health Services are coordinated and the procedure for contacting that location.
- Understanding response and coordination with other mental health providers e.g. American Red Cross, Nebraska Critical Stress Management Program, local behavioral health providers, Regional Behavioral Health Authorities, local public health authorities, local clergy and other stakeholders.
- Become familiar with the Regional Behavioral Health Authorities’ role in the grant application process for Federal Emergency Management, (FEMA) Crisis Counseling Programs and other behavioral health support funding (e.g., SERG grants).



Anytown, Nebraska Population 5000

BACKGROUND AND SCENARIO-SECTION ONE

It is Wednesday July 13, 2005 in Anytown, Nebraska. The town has a population of 5000 residents. Anytown is accustomed to relatively little going on most of the time. The town consists of 1 full time police station with 3 officers on duty around the clock. The town has a full time fire department and EMS service. For any major incidents the city relies heavily on mutual aid coming from 3 surrounding communities. Each of these surrounding communities has only volunteer emergency responders and county law enforcement for support. Two major highways intersect in the city. The city ball field and swimming pool are on the south end of town and on opposite sides of the highway. The ball field is on the east surrounded by residential housing and the swimming pool on the west. The water treatment facility for the city lies just beyond the swimming pool to the west. The wind is out of the west and is blowing east at 10 to 15 mph. It is hot with a heat index of 95 degrees Fahrenheit.

There is a tee ball game being played on the outskirts of town with approximately 65 parents, children and on lookers attending. One ambulance and 1 officer are posted at the game and everyone is having an enjoyable afternoon. The highway is busy with vacation travelers going to various different locations. The swimming pool is also busy with many people seeking relief from the heat.

At approximately 6:30 pm a family of 4 is leaving in their van from the ball field and turns onto the highway, not seeing a large semi truck towing a chemical tank of some sort. The truck driver desperately slams on the breaks and skids for 100 feet before impacting the van and both vehicles erupt in flames. The tank slams into a vehicle heading in the opposite direction and begins to cart wheel towards the swimming pool, coming to rest just on the eastern edge of the swimming pool.

Immediately, people rush to the aid of those who were in the path of the cart-wheeling tank. Eleven children and 1 adult are critically injured, as well as several people in the pool hit by debris from the wreck. For the family in the van and the driver of the truck there is no hope. They were either killed in the impact or burned to death by the subsequent fire. Many onlookers witnessed the carnage and are standing in disbelief while others still try to help. Soon, people trying to help are overcome by a smell of ammonia. Many would-be heroes retreat while two collapse desperately trying to help the wounded.

It is soon apparent that a white gas and clear liquid are leaking from the tank and heading toward the ball field to the east. Traffic is immediately blocked from the accident and the sirens begin to wail in the community.

The scene is chaotic as people begin to panic and try desperately to find their loved ones. The police officer is overwhelmed with trying to summon more help and keep the people calm. He notices the white cloud of gas beginning to head in his direction and panics when he sees parents trying to load their children into vehicles as the cloud approaches. He knows that because the highway is blocked that people retreating to their cars are possibly putting themselves at greater risk because the vehicles will not be able to get out of the parking lot. He grabs his bull horn and stands on top of his patrol car and begins yelling above the din for people to move away from the approaching cloud. Other emergency responders arrive and attempt to assist. He is distraught when people don't seem to heed his warning and continue to move towards their vehicles.

The emergency manager is paged and over the phone declares a city emergency and begins to page all mutual aid to the scene, ordering an evacuation of the southeastern part of town. A trained hazmat person on the fire department arrives from the south and sees that a liquid is running down the road and going into a storm drain near the site of the accident. This storm drain leads to a reservoir which serves as a major source of potable water for the town. Immediately he notifies the city manager and the water is turned off. The vehicles involved in the initial accident are left to burn.

Several people are overcome by the plume and collapse. This includes 3 families who took refuge in their vehicles. The fire department is unable to do anything except watch as victims lay helpless in the cloud of toxic gas. The fire chief begins escorting people away from the drifting plume. The responders begin to regain some control of the scene and people are temporarily escorted to churches and other shelters. News of the event is quickly spreading with a speculation of the death toll and a local declaration of emergency is declared.

**DO NOT OPEN UNTIL INSTRUCTED BY THE
FACILITATOR!!**

SECTION ONE QUESTIONS

1. After the emergency is declared and news of the event spreads who will notify you of the need for your possible assistance?
2. Who should you report to and coordinate with on the local level at the initial onset of the emergency?
3. What equipment or tools you will need to take with you?
4. How will you initially identify who may have mental health issues that need to be addressed?
5. What tracking tools will you use to gather contact information of potentially affected people?
6. How will you alert other behavioral health persons for assistance?
7. When you realize the potential amount of trauma that might have occurred what additional resources will you need and who will you contact to obtain them?
8. Who will be in charge of the behavioral health response as a whole?
9. What will your primary role be at this time?

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SCENARIO UPDATE 3 WEEKS LATER SECTION TWO

Three weeks have pasted since the horrific accident that left 33 people dead, including 12 children under the age of 16 with the youngest being 3 months old. Many families have been displaced and the surrounding communities are still reeling from the event. Support is coming in from across the state and volunteers are flooding in to assist the families. The water system has been contaminated with ammonia as well as diesel and gasoline from the vehicles involved in the accident. The city is busy trying to salvage and/or replace the water system and restore systems throughout the city. Water has been hauled in and routed to the city to supply the citizens with water. Throughout this time many memorial services have been held and State and Federal agencies are assisting the city with managing the needs of the community.

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SECTION TWO QUESTIONS

1. At this point what activities are taking place in the Behavioral Health Field?
2. What out reach programs are in place to find people in need of care?
3. Who is most at risk to still be dealing with the effects of the accident?
4. Who is primarily responsible for seeing to the victims mental health needs?
5. Who would you need to be coordinating with at this point and how do you establish open lines of communications?
6. What state and federal resources and agencies would be assisting you and how would you coordinate the efforts?
7. What are some of the warning signs you would look for in someone who might need help?
8. What are other issues at this point do you think you might be dealing with?

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SCENARIO UPDATE 9 MONTHS LATER SECTION THREE

State and Federal Agencies personnel in the mental health field are starting to head home. People are continuing to improve as well as the community. Things seem to be back to normal. A new water system is in place and the pool has been renovated and fixed and will soon be having summer visitors again. Almost a year has gone by and still some people are having difficulty overcoming the tragic event that most believed would never happen in Anytown, Nebraska. Some families have moved away from the area having trouble passing the site where the incident took place.

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SECTION THREE QUESTIONS

1. How will you continue assist the community at this point?
2. What grants are available and what do you need to do to obtain them?
3. What type of documentation tools have you been using and how do you track the progress of the mental health team?
4. At this point who is most at risk of having difficulty dealing with the event that took place almost 9 months ago?
5. What programs are available to help assist first responders that were at the scene that day?
6. What are some typical feelings people in the community will have trouble dealing with?
7. What assistance is in place to identify and help those who are not open to sharing their feelings with others and how do we overcome that?
8. When the event is finally over is there plans in place to assist the mental health professionals who have been involved in the event and what special needs would be considered?

End of Exercise

Participants are encouraged to fill out the end of exercise evaluation forms that will be handed out during the exercise.