



Disaster Scenario Exercise for Community Planning  
Critical Power Failure  
FEMA 2011

EXERCISE

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**Disaster Scenario Exercise for Community Planning** [TIMING OF SLIDE: 5 minutes]

FACILITATOR: I'd like to welcome you to our Disaster Scenario Exercise, developed by FEMA's Office of External Affairs and National Exercise Division. This exercise is based on real events that have occurred in some combination of U.S. communities. The scenario is a Critical Power Failure with complicating severe weather events. During this exercise our community will identify ways to prepare, to respond, and to and recover from a major incident.

Housekeeping: The exercise may take us up to five hours to complete. We will take one 20-minute break. Please set your mobile phones to vibrate. Do not turn them off. You will receive two emergency text alerts as a part of this exercise. Note that restrooms are located [where], and emergency exits are located [where].

## Purpose

- Why are we investing this time?
- Where is your organization in emergency planning?
- Do we have unidentified gaps?
- Have we considered all populations?



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 10 minutes]

[FACILITATOR explains the value of investing time in this exercise: To build community relationships as a critical step in being prepared for emergencies. To test and inform your organization's emergency plans in relation to the community's emergency plan.

- gives an overview of areas of possible overlap and conflict:
  - Are organizations in our community unknowingly planning to use the same evacuation routes or public meeting places?
  - Do we have sufficient contingency plans?
  - Are there unidentified gaps in telecommunications, utilities, water, fuel supply, shelters, comfort stations, and other areas of shared resources, including backup and redundant systems?
  - What is our plan for identifying and allowing essential employees to gain access to impacted buildings or properties?
  - Among public sector agencies and private sector organizations, who is responsible for what? What is the chain of command? What is the system and procedure for communications?
  - Have we considered all populations including vulnerable populations?

# Agenda

- Overview of modules
- Hotwash
- Introductions



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 10 minutes]

FACILITATOR: I'd like to give you an overview of this exercise. One of our objectives is to develop our community teams. During this exercise we will work together through a number of interactive modules covering the stages of disasters -- prepare, protect, respond, recover and mitigate. In a moment we will go around and introduce ourselves. After introductions, and a review of the rules, we will walk through this exercise as if experiencing it real world; five days of events will be condensed into our five-hours. By the end of this exercise we will have an understanding of specific steps we can take as individuals, organizations, and a community during each stage of a major incident.

We will also discuss mitigation and actions we can take to mitigate against damage from subsequent incidents.

We will end the exercise with a hotwash discussion where we will sum up our observations and findings, ideally in a form that will inform and improve all of our respective plans and the community emergency plan.

[NOTE: FACILITATOR introduces himself/herself and can provide some details on his/her relevant experience and background. If the FACILITATOR is working with other facilitators, they will introduce themselves as well.]

FACILITATOR then allows the players/participants to introduce themselves, their title/position/responsibility, including, if time allows, their experience (if any) in emergency planning, and their goal for participating in this exercise.]

## Objectives

- Exercise teamwork: Public Sector + Private Sector = Resilient Communities.
- Provide us tools for emergency planning, and a forum for discussing and developing emergency plans
- Test assumptions



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 3 minutes]

[NOTE: FACILITATOR can provide additional objectives specific to the community .

## Rules for Players

- Relax – this is a no-fault exercise.
- Respond based on your current capability.
- Allow for artificialities of the scenario – it's a tool.
- Feel free to improvise – think outside the box.
- This is a safe environment, a chance to propose and test solutions.
- The more you contribute, the more successful we will be.



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 2 minutes]

FACILITATOR: The rules for this exercise are to:

Each participant should consider the information presented from the point of view of what his or her role and responsibilities would be during the emergency.

## Our Community

- Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources
- Economic Development Overview including key sectors, schools and colleges
- Maps
- Weather/Climate
- Hospitals, fire, police, rescue
- Local and state resources



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 10 minutes]

FACILITATOR: The facilitator and/or guest speaker(s) presents an overview of the community including: Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources , and Local and state resources

[This slide is optional and may be deleted or edited to meet local needs]

## Scenario: Critical Power Failure

- With complicating severe weather



[TIMING OF SLIDE: 3 minutes]

**FACILITATOR:** The scenario we will exercise will represent a critical, extended multi-state power failure complicated by a severe weather event. Here are some other impacts to expect:

**Casualties: In the hundreds**

**Infrastructure Damage:** Infrastructure is crippled; sewer/water treatment facilities failed. Water supply and beaches are polluted.

**Evacuations/Displaced Persons:** Tens of thousands from cities, suburbs and small towns, some permanently displaced

**Economic Impact:** Billions of dollars in the region

**Recovery Timeline:** Months

# Emergency Management

- Prepare and Protect
- Respond
- Recover
- Mitigate
- Overview of National Response Framework, National Incident Management System, and Incident Command System



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 5 minutes]

FACILITATOR: Emergency management is an organized process by which organizations and communities: Prepare for and Protect against hazards. Respond to emergencies that occur. Recover from emergencies to restore the community to its pre-emergency condition. Mitigate risks. The degree to which emergency management is effective depends heavily on the emergency planning process.

**National Response Framework is a guide to how our nation conducts all-hazards response;** it is published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency. The document presents the key response principles, participants, roles and structures that guide the Nation's response operations. **The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a companion document that provides** standard command and management structures that apply to response activities. NIMS provides a consistent, nationwide template to enable any government, the private sector, and NGO's to work together to manage an incident, from preparing for incidents to recovering from them. See [www.fema.gov/nrf](http://www.fema.gov/nrf). Much of NIMS is built on the Incident Command System (ICS). **ICS is used by many jurisdictions and agencies both public and private to organize and manage command of field-level incidents, large and small.** If you would like additional information, **FEMA's Emergency Management Institute offers free online courses in NIMS, ICS and NRF at <http://training.fema.gov/IS/>**



## Prepare and Protect

- Have a plan, activate it
- Gather the planning team
- Assess hazards, prepare facilities and people
- Confirm and check evacuation plans and routes
- Stock and check supplies and first aid
- Monitor incident development
- Activate Response Teams
- Coordinate among public sector agencies and private sector organizations



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 8 minutes]

FACILITATOR: These are some of the actions that an organization or community may take to **prepare and protect** people, property, the environment and the economy:

- Private sector organizations** ideally will work with public sector emergency managers and first responders, to develop and exercise emergency plans, in advance of an actual incident.
- To protect citizens, **local and state officials** may have planned: alerts; activation and notification; traffic and access control; protection of special populations; resource support and requests for assistance; and public information activities. State agencies may be working to: Identify distribution centers for emergency supplies, identify any gaps in resources; stand up emergency operations and share situational awareness with stakeholders; perform community outreach for evacuations and shelters as necessary; Protect the health and welfare of citizens.
- FEMA & federal partners** will be working to: coordinate with states; pre-position resources and supplies; provide technical assistance to state and local responders; share situational awareness, coordinate disaster declaration if necessary.

VNN

▪ Click to Play News:

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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 8 minutes]

[FACILITATOR: PLAY EMBEDDED VIDEO]

VNN ANCHOR Good evening and welcome to VNN. Breaking news. Streets without power. Millions without lights. A sudden and devastating blackout left many of our neighboring counties, cities, and towns in the dark. The surrounding region is at a standstill and a 911 outage emergency is in effect. Local officials are scrambling to get emergency info to millions of homes that now have no TV or internet services. So far the blackout has not affected our immediate area, but local officials are preparing for the worst and are urging every citizen to prepare their homes, businesses, and families for a possible loss of power. Even without the cover of darkness, the local community is already feeling the impact as transportation in the region has been crippled. Reports are in that the airport's back-up power failed, leaving the control tower and ticketing systems inoperable. At least 475 outbound flights were cancelled and inbound flights were diverted leaving thousands of passengers stranded. Subways, light rails, and other public transportation operating from electricity were shut down. 911 systems, while operable, are overwhelmed by volumes of calls from residents trapped in elevators and train cars. Cell phone service is taking a big hit as providers are struggling to restore service after back-up power sources failed. Several gas stations are closed, so motorists are running out of gas, leaving stalled vehicles along the highway already clogged with pedestrians forced to walk long distances home.

No one knows the exact cause of the outage at this time and the theories are numerous. Politicians point to gross mismanagement of power systems. Some officials suspect a possible act of terrorism, while others blame a mild earthquake and warn that a larger earthquake could be imminent. Although the jury is still out on the cause, the verdict is in on the resulting effect: complete and total chaos. And this disaster couldn't have come at a worse time. Temperatures have reached record highs this week and people desperate for relief, are running cooling units which are draining an already strained power grid. Officials are asking local residents to conserve power whenever possible, but Health officials warn that the elderly, infirm and families with infants can be especially vulnerable to the scorching heat. Police are urging residents to stay home and off the roadways wherever possible, to keep the roads clear for emergency responders en route to assist our neighbors. Stay tuned for more updates on this devastating situation. I'm (insert name) for VNN.

## Prepare & Protect - Discussion

- What are our priorities?
- What are our initial actions?
- What message do we need to communicate, and to whom? What if systems fail?
- Who are vulnerable populations, who may require aid? How will we deliver it?
- What are the hazards?
- What are our needs for supplies, etc.?



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 20-30 minutes]

[FACILITATOR LEADS discussion. FACILITATOR instructs each table of participants to discuss each question among themselves. AFTER 15 MINUTES, FACILITATOR asks a representative from each table to stand and share ONE OR TWO MAJOR AREAS OF AGREEMENT /COORDINATION, AND ONE OR TWO MAJOR AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT/CONFUSION. These are discussed with all the participants in the room and captured on paper, laptop or other media for later follow up.]

[In addition to these questions, FACILITATOR can prompt the participants with more specific questions customized to your community.]

Consider: Stabilizing the incident's impact on property, environment, economy

How do needs differ among the groups in your charge (employees, customers, visitors, others?)

What equipment/ resources do we already have in place?

What are some potential obstacles?

Are there any security concerns?

[After a 20-30 minute discussion, allow participants to take a 20-minute break.]

FACILITATOR

When you return from your break, the incident escalates.



- Break

[TIMING OF SLIDE: 20 minutes]

FACILITATOR gives participants a break of approximately 20 minutes.

# Respond

- Mobilize and position emergency equipment
- Evacuate or shelter-in-place
- Provide food, water, shelter, medical services
- Initiate continuity plans
- Assess and restore damaged services and systems
- Coordinate among local responders, government agencies, and private sector organizations



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 8 minutes]

FACILITATOR: These are actions that may be taken in the **response** stage after a disaster.

This phase involves mobilizing and **positioning** emergency equipment; **confirming** location of those in your charge and getting them out of danger; **providing** needed food, water, shelter, and medical services to those in your charge; **initiating** continuity actions; and **identifying** any barriers to bringing damaged services and systems back on line.

-**Local responders**, government agencies, and private organizations take action,

ideally working as a team following plans that were developed well before the emergency. When the damage is beyond local and State capabilities, the state Governor may request Federal assistance and support.

-**Organizations** may be focused on such actions as: Ensuring the safety of those in their charge; Executing emergency plans; Securing facilities; Supporting First Responders; Assisting the community at large (if time and resources allow).

-**Local, state and federal agencies** will be working to: Deploy first responders; Identify vulnerable populations; Prioritize life-saving measures; Provide and maintain shelters; Distribute food, water and supplies; Coordinate with other affected states; and Provide situational awareness to the public-private response team.



TIMING OF SLIDE: 8 minutes]

[FACILITATOR plays radio report, audio only]

VNN ANCHOR: Good morning. Breaking news from VNN radio. The Governor has declared a state of emergency as the chaos arrives at our front door. Local residents are now without power adding to the tens of millions who already lost power nearly 24 hours ago. Our studio here at VNN is operating on generator power as are many hospitals and critical infrastructure. Officials are asking building owners to conserve fuel and to only operate essential services. Gas stations that remain open are reporting long lines at pumps across the regions, and some stations have pushed up prices. A boil water advisory is in effect for the area due to the loss of power in sewer centers and decontamination facilities. Essential government is operating, but asks that all non-essential government employees remain at home. Many private corporations and small businesses are encouraging their employees to do the same.

Still no final word on the cause of the disaster as experts and officials continue to issue conflicting reports. All that is certain is that unspecified operating errors at one or more power generating facilities have resulted in power outages of massive proportions. We have reports of a number of deaths overnight from fires in homes that were likely caused by the use of candles or the improper use of generators. To add to this grim news, meteorologists issued a one two-punch this morning with an ominous weather forecast. High heat will persist late into the afternoon, forcing millions suffering from the heat wave to get by without cooling units. A cold front is then expected to sweep across the area in the early evening bringing with it, its own threat of possible severe storms. If that's not enough, Health officials warn that a more immediate threat could be right in our homes. Power outages could cause bacteria outbreaks in refrigerated food and officials suggest that when in doubt, throw food out.

Police are still struggling to get emergency information to a powerless residents and the local government is offering these blackout and heat wave safety tips: boil water before drinking it, wear light-colored loose fitting clothing, avoid strenuous activities, and check in on elderly relatives and neighbors. Stay tuned right here at VNN for more updates and advisories.

## Respond - Discussion

- Transportation
- Incident Command
- Operating Locations
- Staffing Needs
- Security Concerns
- Emergency Supplies
- Communication/Messaging



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 20-30 minutes]

**[FACILITATOR first LEADS discussion and instructs each table of participants to discuss each question among themselves.** AFTER 10-15 MINUTES, FACILITATOR asks a representative from each table to stand and share ONE OR TWO MAJOR AREAS OF AGREEMENT AND COORDINATION, AND ONE OR TWO MAJOR AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT/CONFUSION. These are discussed with all the participants in the room and captured on paper, laptop or other media for later follow up.]

[In addition to these questions, FACILITATOR can prompt the participants with more specific questions customized to your community.]

How are you impacted by the Incident Command System?

Where will your emergency response team operate from? What are their needs?

How does the impact to mass transit and transportation infrastructure impact your response?

**[FACILITATOR then INTRODUCES the Communication/Messaging discussion ]**

In the next three slides we will see three different reports about the pending disaster in the form of a local government text, a local news outlet alert, and a twitter message. After we review the messages we will discuss how we would respond to the conflicting information that is being simultaneously communicated to the public, and explore the potential problems this could create for the community.



## Local Government Emergency Text Alert



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 4 minutes]

[FACILITATOR sends text alert to participants' cell phones, or as an alternate approach, reads alert to participants (animation removed in accordance with 508 compliance)]

ALERT TEXT: **Exercise. Exercise. Exercise.** Severe Thunderstorm Warning and Tornado Watch in effect until 8:00 p.m. Cold front approaching, wind gusts to 60 mph, possible downpours and hail. Stay indoors or seek shelter. **Exercise. Exercise. Exercise.**



## VNN Emergency Text Alert



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 4 minutes]

[FACILITATOR sends text alert to participants' cell phones, or as an alternate approach, reads alert to participants (animation removed in accordance with 508 compliance)]

ALERT TEXT: **Exercise. Exercise. Exercise.** News Alert: Tornado Watch cancelled. Heavy rains expected across the region. Tune in to VNN for more information. **Exercise. Exercise. Exercise.**

Twitter Post

twitter 

Search

The best way to discover what's new in your world.

**Top Tweets** [View all](#)

 **GeauxSaints** It's Crazy! Wind just blew the roof off three houses on Elm St!!! Armageddon headed our way. Take cover  
[3 minutes ago](#)

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TWITTER POST: **Exercise. Exercise. Exercise.** It's Crazy! Wind just blew the roof off three houses on Elm St!!! Armageddon headed our way. Take cover **Exercise. Exercise. Exercise.**

## Respond - Discussion

- Information Reliability
- Alternative Communications
- Government Capabilities
- Public Capabilities
- Options



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 20-30 minutes]

[FACILITATOR LEADS discussion of local government , news, and twitter message.]

What information source is the community most likely to rely on?

What potential dangers does this create for the community?

How can we partner together to ensure “one message” is communicated?

What tools do we have to ensure this happens?

What steps can we take to coordinate messaging during all stages of an incident?

[FACILITATOR then instructs each table of participants to discuss the other questions among themselves. AFTER 15 MINUTES, FACILITATOR asks a representative from each table to stand and share ONE OR TWO MAJOR AREAS OF AGREEMENT AND COORDINATION, AND ONE OR TWO MAJOR AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT/CONFUSION. These are discussed with all the participants in the room and captured on paper, laptop or other media for later follow up.]

What communications systems does the government have?

What communications systems does the private sector and general population have?

What are some alternative communications options?

# Recover

- Provide relief
- Distribute disaster assistance
- Assess damage
- Form community committee to plan long-term recovery
- Restore community tax base and local economy
- Repair infrastructure
- Restore housing



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 8 minutes]

FACILITATOR: **Recovery** is the task of rebuilding after a disaster.

This process can take months, even years and require rebuilding of services and infrastructure, facilities and operations, and the lives and livelihoods of many thousands of people. Recovery planning identifies the long-range actions needed to return the community to pre-disaster tax-base level within five years. During this process:

- Private sector organizations may:** Wait for word to return; Assess damages and take pictures; Compile and report damages to insurance company; Clean up; Coordinate efforts with public sector recovery team; Assess psychological issues, infrastructure issues, liability issues, insurance issues, documentation issues
- States** will be working to: Reestablish infrastructure; Implement temporary disaster housing plan; Lead the recovery; Budget for long-term recovery
- FEMA and federal partners** will be working to: Produce Preliminary Damage Assessments; Confirm and publicize if federal assistance is available; Maintain a Joint Field Office in support of the state Emergency Operations Center; Establish long-term recovery effort where appropriate; Support communities to return to pre-disaster tax-base level within five years.



[TIMING OF SLIDE: 6 minutes]

FACILITATOR PLAYS EMBEDDED VIDEO.

VNN ANCHOR: Good morning. This is VNN. Relief at last. It's been five days since the blackout first struck our region and power has finally been restored to at least 89% of the region. City officials cannot predict when full power will be restored, but report that two thirds of the region's traffic lights are now operable. Drivers are cautioned to treat stop signs as four way stops and minimize travel whenever possible as cleanup crews are still working to clear fallen trees and other debris from the roadways. Public transportation is now running, but operating on a modified schedule. Major wireless providers are reporting that voice and data networks are 82% operational, but are suggesting that customers with full service use their cell phones sparingly until the networks are fully restored. The region is reviving slowly, but things are far from normal. Thousands of displaced residents remain in emergency shelters and many of those, who were victims to home fires or storm damage, are now permanently displaced. Millions are still under a boil water advisory and raw sewage and industrial chemicals from failed treatment facilities have polluted natural waterways and beaches. The looming question is, what will the financial impact of the blackout be? Although it is too early to predict the final costs, all signs point to a long recovery. Major retailers including grocery stores are feeling the bite. Hundreds of stores, forced to close, lost millions of dollars in revenues on top of the millions in spoiled produce, meats and frozen goods. And while the lights are on at many businesses, the future is not so bright for many employees. Some companies will operate with limited staff only as they await deliveries and supplies. Local economic development officials fear as many as 10% of small businesses may not be able to recover and might shut their doors forever.

As for the cause of the blackout, officials remain in the dark, but a joint public-private taskforce chaired by the US Energy Secretary has been formed to investigate. The local government has promised to fight to uncover the truth behind this catastrophe, and to ensure that it never happens again. This is (insert name) for VNN.

## Recover - Discussion

- How will we repair structural and physical damage?
- How will we restore disrupted services?
- How will we address health and safety hazards?
- How will we limit economic loss? Limit loss to property
- How will we return to the economic base prior to the outage?
- Are there any gaps or redundancies in our roles?



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 20-30 minutes]

[FACILITATOR LEADS discussion. FACILITATOR instructs each table of participants to discuss each question among themselves. AFTER 10-15 MINUTES, FACILITATOR asks a representative from each table to stand and share ONE OR TWO MAJOR AREAS OF AGREEMENT AND COORDINATION, AND ONE OR TWO MAJOR AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT/CONFUSION. These are discussed with all the participants in the room and captured on paper, laptop or other media for later follow up.]

[In addition to these questions, FACILITATOR can prompt the participants with more specific questions customized to your community.]

How will we assess and respond to possible long-term interruptions to:

Telecommunications? Utilities? Human Resources/employee absences? Water?  
Supply chain? Fuel supply? Transportation? Credit card and banking transactions?

How will we repair structural and physical damage?

How will we restore disrupted services?

How will we remove health and safety hazards?

How will we resume normalcy?

How will we document any damaged property?

How will we track labor involved in the cleanup?

How will we limit economic loss? How will we limit loss to property? To environment?

# Mitigate

- What hazards have been identified in the community?
- What steps can we take to mitigate risks?
- What steps is the community taking to mitigate community-wide risks?
- How can private sector organizations work with public sector officials?



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 8 minutes]

[NOTE: Slide is optional, depending on available time.]

FACILITATOR: Hazard Mitigation means any action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards.

Some hazards cannot be mitigated; others are too costly to mitigate.

Many nonstructural hazards in a facility can be mitigated easily and inexpensively.

A Discussion of Mitigation would require more time than we have for this exercise.

However, our emergency planning teams should work closely with the local Emergency Manager and responders to learn:

What hazards have been identified in the community?

What steps can we take to mitigate risks?

What steps is the community taking to mitigate community-wide risks?

How can private sector organizations work with public sector officials?

Experts in emergency management and response, risk management, structural engineering, and psychological tragedy response may suggest ways to mitigate hazards at our facilities.

After our planners have the necessary information about existing hazards and mitigation possibilities, we can identify the costs of mitigation and steps to be taken.

## Hot Wash

- What gaps in our organization/community plans were revealed?
- What obstacles must we overcome or conflicts resolve?
- What strengths in our organization/community plans were proven by this exercise?
- Who within and outside of our organizations do we need to meet with to develop and improve our emergency plans? What information do you need from them?
- List three to five short-term and three to five long-term actions for follow-up.



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 20 minutes]

[NOTE: This is an open discussion that occurs immediately after the tabletop exercise and is conducted by the FACILITATOR. The objective of the hot wash is to review events or key decisions that took place during the exercise and to provide an opportunity for participants to describe immediate lessons learned and to identify barriers/gaps in mounting an effective response. All participants are free to contribute and are encouraged to do so. An employee or volunteer should transcribe lessons learned and recommendations and distribute them to the participants for follow up and improvement.

Hot Wash Questions:

What gaps in your plans were revealed by this exercise?

What obstacles must you overcome or conflicts must you resolve?

What strengths in your plans were proven by this exercise?

Who within your organization do you need to meet with to develop and improve your emergency plans? And what information do you need from them?

Who outside your organization do you need to meet with to develop and improve your emergency plans? And what information do you need from them?

Also consider soliciting feedback on this exercise and/or the FACILITATOR's ability through an evaluation survey at the end of the hot wash.



## Planning Resources

- <http://www.ready.gov>
- <http://www.fema.gov>
- <http://www.fema.gov/privatesector/>
- <http://Training.fema.gov>
- Community Resources



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[TIMING OF SLIDE: 3 minutes]

[FACILITATOR encourages participants to visit these online resources for tools and more information. FACILITATOR can add additional links and resources here.]

## Contact

For more information or to provide feedback on this exercise, contact:

FEMA  
Office of External Affairs, Private Sector Division  
500 C St. SW  
Washington, DC  
Email [FEMA-private-sector@dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-private-sector@dhs.gov)



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For more information or to provide feedback on this exercise, contact:

FEMA  
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500 C St. SW  
Washington, DC  
Email [FEMA-private-sector@dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-private-sector@dhs.gov)