

Tornado Tabletop Exercise Template



**GHCA Emergency Preparedness Committee
August 13, 2014**

PREFACE

The **Tornado Tabletop Exercise Template** was developed by the Georgia Health Care Association (GHCA) Emergency Preparedness Committee. This Tornado Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Situation Manual (SitMan) provides exercise participants with all the necessary tools for their roles in the exercise. This SitMan was developed specifically as a learning tool. It is tangible evidence of the facility's commitment to promote public safety through collaborative partnerships that will prepare the facility to respond to any emergency. All exercise participants should use appropriate guidelines to promote a positive and effective TTX.



INTRODUCTION

Background

Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) must embrace and expand upon their knowledge of emergency management methodologies. This includes the Incident Command System (ICS) which is used by external healthcare systems, public health, homeland security and emergency management partners with whom the SNF may be required to work during an emergency event. Similar to the overarching mission of homeland security, in order to strengthen emergency preparedness, SNFs must develop their capabilities to prevent, protect, respond, and recover. The implementation of a facility's emergency management plan and the true validation of their plan through the exercise and improvement planning process, will only strengthen a facility's capabilities.

Purpose

The Tornado TTX provides facility leaders with a useful exercise to address tornado threats, issues, and concerns. The exercise allows participants to address key issues through a series of self-facilitated discussions.

Scope

This tabletop exercise is an interactive, discussion-based activity focused on a Tornado incident. The scenario consists of three modules in chronological order and portrays a pre-incident phase, an incident and response phase, and an assessment phase.

Exercise Objectives

Exercise design objectives are focused on improving the understanding of information sharing and incident management activities, and developing recommended actions and procedural adjustments to address potential problem areas. The objectives are as follows:

1. Identify and evaluate plans for response and mitigation of tornado events.
2. Evaluate the Tornado Preparedness Plan and make recommendations for modification as needed based on identification of gaps, redundancies and best practices.
3. Assess the roles and effectiveness of coordination between public safety officials and SNF Leadership in reacting to tornado event in accordance with existing plans.
4. Examine and evaluate facility incident response plans used during a tornado event.
5. Identify and evaluate response, mitigation, and recovery actions associated with a tornado event at the facility.
6. Review relevant memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and community agreements that may take effect in a severe weather (tornado) event.

Participants

The following personnel are encouraged to participate in this exercise:

- Center Associates: Administrators, DONs, Department Heads, Safety Officer, and representatives of front line associates.
- Corporate Office Associates: Operational associates are encouraged to participate within a center TTX as feasible; Office associates are encouraged to participate within your local office location as requested.

It is important that all participants at the table take notes and work to identify questions for discussion or possible gaps in capabilities to take back and discuss with their respective group or agency. Improvement planning is extremely important within the exercise cycle and cannot be done without such participation.

Exercise Structure

The TTX begins with a scenario overview that summarizes key events of the exercise. Then, participants review the situation and engage in facilitated group discussions of appropriate response issues. Additional scenario updates will be provided as participants move through the discussion questions. These questions are divided into six functional categories: pre-storm incident management/communications, surge, evacuation, mass fatality management, decontamination, and post-event recovery.

While it is unlikely that any group will have time to fully answer all questions presented in the SitMan, it is highly encouraged that all participants discuss portions of each section. Each group will present a brief synopsis of its discussion at the end of the tabletop.

Exercise Guidelines

- This is an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
- Respond based on your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (using only existing assets) and insights derived from training.
- Decisions are not precedent-setting and may not reflect your organization's final position on a given issue. This 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 and preparedness efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus.
- Healthcare facilities should bring the exercise day's actual patient/resident census to the tabletop exercise for use during discussions.

Assumptions and Artificialities

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

- Healthcare facilities should assume that initial patient/resident census is actual patient/resident census.
- The scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented.
- There is no hidden agenda, nor any trick questions.
- All participants receive information at the same time.

MODULE 1

Severe weather has been predicted for much of your area. All counties within your area are under a tornado warning. Tornadoes have been spotted throughout the region and it is likely that many communities will be affected by this storm system.

Pre-Storm Incident Management/Communications

1. What preparations will the facility make in response to the tornado warning?
 - a. How will on-duty staff members be notified?
 - b. If facility sustains damage:
 - i. How will off-duty staff members be notified?
 - ii. What local community partners would be notified?
 - iii. What regional partners would be notified?
 - c. What traditional communications methods (landlines, cell phones, email, pagers, etc.) will be utilized to contact these partners?
 - i. What other redundant communications systems are available?
 - d. How will healthcare facilities and response agencies ensure interoperable communications are maintained?
2. How often are call trees or other mass-communication mechanisms (i.e. electronic notification systems) updated/validated at each facility?
 - a. Who has access to this notification system (if applicable)?
 - b. What contact lists at the facility are pre-programmed into Twenty First Century Communications (TFCC)?

(NOTE: If unable to access TFCC system onsite due to power or internet outages, it is likely that regional or state partners could access system remotely and send messages using these pre-programmed lists.)
3. What personal preparedness education and training opportunities are available for staff and staff families at each facility?
4. If the Incident Command Center/Emergency Operations Center must be activated:
 - a. How will the Incident Command System (ICS) be set up and maintained?
 - b. What training has command staff received for assigned roles?
 - c. How might Incident Command activation procedures be modified if the event were to occur at night or on the weekend?
 - d. Are the command center and backup command center on emergency power?
 - e. What local and regional community partners would be informed that the command center has been activated?

MODULE 2

The storm system affecting much of the area has now subsided. Healthcare facilities and community partners are beginning to conduct facility/agency damage assessments and are determining the numbers of people displaced, injured, and/or deceased in their respective communities.

Surge

1. How might the facility ascertain information from the community to gauge the potential influx of residents that result from the severe weather event?
 - a. Upon receiving notification:
 - i. Which, if any, local community partners will be notified?
 - How?
 - By whom?
 - ii. Which, if any, regional partners will be notified?
 - How?
 - By whom?
 - b. What plans are in place at each facility to augment staff during a surge?
 - c. How would the procurement of additional supplies that may be needed to surge be coordinated?
 - i. What MOUs are in place to ensure needed assets may be acquired?
2. How will dissemination of unified messaging be coordinated during a healthcare surge event?
 - a. What information will be released to the public?
 - b. Who will share this information?
3. What resources are available for arriving residents at receiving facilities?
 - a. Locally?
 - b. Regionally?
 - c. What protocols are in place for requesting these resources?
4. At what point would the facility begin to identify residents for discharge or transfer to lesser levels of care?
 - a. If transferring residents to another healthcare facility:
 - i. What protocols are in place for contacting receiving facilities?
 - ii. What regional coordination will be required to place patients/residents?
5. How would volunteers be incorporated into response efforts during a surge?
 - a. What regional resources are available to supplement local volunteer pools?

- i. How would these regional resources be requested?
 - b. What type of just-in-time training is available for volunteers?
 - c. What liability issues may utilizing volunteers present?
- 6. How will security measures be implemented and sustained during a medical surge event?
 - a. Computers/Servers?
 - b. Medications?
 - c. Restricting access to sensitive areas?

Evacuation

1. What processes and/or procedures are in place to decide if a damaged facility is safe to remain in following a tornado event?
 - a. Who would be involved in the decision making process:
 - i. Internally?
 - ii. Externally?
 - b. Who has the authority to deem the building structurally sound?
 - i. What legal requirements are associated with making this decision?
2. What local plans are available to assist in a healthcare facility evacuation?
 - a. Who is responsible for activating:
 - i. Facility specific plans?
 - ii. Local/county emergency plans?
 - b. When would one expect the county EOC to be operationalized?
 - i. Who would the EMA notify regarding the activation of the EOC?
 - ii. Who would be stationed at the EOC?
 - c. How would the activation of these plans be communicated to local/county partners? Consider:
 - i. Redundant communications systems identified in the communications matrix
 - ii. Interoperability of communications systems between agencies
 - d. What education and training have staff members/agencies received with regards to implementing the local EOPs?
3. How will dissemination of unified messaging be coordinated during a healthcare evacuation event?
 - a. What information will be released to the public?
 - b. Who will share this information?
 - c. Does the community have a plan for establishing a Joint Information Center (JIC)?

4. What regional resources are available to assist the local response should the need arise?
 - a. How would these resources be requested?
 - b. From whom would they be requested?
 - c. How will this be communicated to those within the region? (i.e. GHA911 WebEOC event logs, etc.)
 - i. How do community partners ensure access to these communications platforms?
5. During a healthcare evacuation response, what are the roles and responsibilities of:
 - a. Facility staff/corporate staff?
 - b. Locally:
 - i. Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs)?
 - ii. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)?
 - iii. Public Safety?
 - iv. County Public Health?
 - v. Elected and appointed officials?
 - c. Regionally:
 - i. Regional Coordinating Hospital (RCH)?
 - ii. District Public Health?
 - iii. Coalition members?
 - d. State:
 - i. State Public Health?
 - ii. Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA)?
 - iii. Georgia Hospital Association (GHA)/Georgia Healthcare Association (GHCA)/Other trade associations?
 - e. Others?
 - i. DOD resources/military assets?
6. What transport resources must be requested?
 - a. Specifically, what types of transport resources will be required for each healthcare facility to evacuate?
 - i. EMS units:
 - Advanced Life Support (ALS)?
 - Basic Life Support (BLS)?
 - Specialty units (pediatric, bariatric, etc.)?
 - ii. Non-emergency transit resources:
 - Buses?

- Wheelchair vans?
 - Others?
- b. From whom will these resources be requested?
 - i. Locally?
 - ii. Regionally?
 - iii. Statewide?
 - c. What are your plans if traditional or contracted transport assets are no longer available?
 - i. How will additional assets be requested?
 - d. How will these resources be coordinated to avoid duplication?
 - i. Locally?
 - ii. Regionally?
7. What are the plans for tracking residents, their medications, and associated supplies/equipment?
 - a. What regional resources are available to assist with patient/resident tracking?
 8. What steps will be taken to monitor and assist with mental health issues that may arise during a healthcare evacuation? Consider:
 - a. Residents?
 - b. Staff?
 - c. Family members?
 9. Once event is over, what procedures are in place for returning residents to the healthcare facility from which they were evacuated?
 - a. Who determines when residents can return to the healthcare facility?
 - b. What resources are available to assist with this return?

MODULE 3

It has been 24 hours since the tornadoes hit the area and EMA has begun a damage assessment of the area. Reports are coming in that the tornado damage is widespread, with many roads blocked by debris and many bridges destroyed. Power is out in many communities. Georgia Power estimates it will be several days before power can be restored and the Georgia Department of Transportation estimates it will take several days before major roads can be restored so traffic can resume. Local law enforcement is increasing security measures due to various reports of looting throughout the community. EMS is still transporting patients to area hospitals, which are currently on emergency power. Public Health and American Red Cross are assessing the need for shelters and identifying locations for these shelters.

Post-Event Recovery

1. The storm has disrupted supply shipments to the facilities and the facility just received a call that the next shipment won't arrive for another 96 hours. Consider the following:
 - a. What plans are in place to address the shortage of supplies?
 - b. What supplies are maintained in the facility's emergency cache, if any?
 - c. What MOU's are currently in place with vendors to provide supplies during an emergency?
 - d. What conservation measures can be implemented for:
 - i. Food?
 - ii. Linen?
 - iii. Other supplies?
 - e. When would the decision be made to implement conservation measures?
 - f. How would patient care be affected?
 - g. What resources can be contacted for assistance, if any?
2. How would healthcare facilities be impacted by a community-wide utility outage and/or gas shortage during an extended event?
3. What preparations could be made immediately to mitigate the impact of this type of situation?

APPENDIX A: Evaluation

1. Please provide feedback on the Tornado Preparedness Plan:
 - a. Was it helpful in guiding your actions?
 - b. Did you identify any gaps in the plan?
 - c. Do you have any recommendations for the plan?
2. Did you find this TTX helpful for emergency preparedness?
 - a. Why or why not?
3. Did you find the format of this SitMan helpful for the TTX?
 - a. Why or why not?