

Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services

After Action Report Improvement Plan

VTTX Winter Storm



**12/2/2016
FINAL**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services participated in a Winter Storm Virtual Tabletop Exercise (VTTX) that is sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA), Emergency Management Institute (EMI) as one of a series of virtual exercises designed to bring numerous communities together in a collaborative environment. This After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) follows guidance set forth by the U.S Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).

The nearly four-hour, facilitator-led discussion touched the core capabilities of Planning, Public Information and Warning and Operational Coordination. This AAR/IP summarizes the success of the exercise in meeting its goals.

Several strengths were noted in the County's understanding and performance of emergency procedures and roles. There were also several areas that could be improved based on the gaps, challenges, and recommended actions identified in the VTTX. These identified areas of improvement provided a basis of recommending a series of corrective actions or assignments in Appendix A. Improvement areas actions included coordinated training, plan review, and outreach to external partners.

A list of workshop participants can be found in Appendix B.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	Virtual Tabletop Exercise (VTTX) – Winter Storm
Exercise Dates	November 9, 2016 8:00 am – 1:00 pm
Scope	This is a discussion-based exercise, planned for four hours hosted by the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) and conducted with multiple remote Video Teleconference sites including Sacramento County.
Mission Area(s)	Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response and Recovery
Core Capabilities	Planning, Public Information and Warning; Operational Coordination; Situation Awareness
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the capability to deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable and actionable information to the whole community.• Discuss the capability to establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that integrates all critical stakeholders.• Discuss the capability to provide decision-makers with decision-relevant information regarding the nature and extent of hazards.
Threat or Hazard	Winter Storm
Scenario	The Winter Storm VTTX was designed around the realistic scenario of winter storm with warning and builds to a significant snow fall which causes significant effort and actions by the participating jurisdictions and agencies.
Sponsor	Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services
Grant	No grant funds were allocated
Participating Organizations	A VTTX sign-in sheet is attached in Appendix B.
Point of Contact	Mary Jo Flynn, MS, CEM Emergency Operations Coordinator Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services flynnm@sacoes.org (916) 874-4671 office; (916) 508-5131 cell

ANALYSIS OF CORE CAPABILITIES

Aligning exercise objectives and core capabilities provides a consistent taxonomy for evaluation that transcends individual exercises to support preparedness reporting and trend analysis. Table 1 includes the exercise objectives, aligned core capabilities, and performance ratings for each core capability as observed during the exercise and determined by the evaluation team.

Objective	Core Capability	Performance
Discuss the capability to deliver, coordinated, prompt, reliable and actionable information to the whole community	Planning, Public Information and Warning	P
Discuss the capability to establish and maintain a coordinated and unified structure and process that integrates all stakeholders	Operational Coordination	P
Discuss the capability to provide decision makers with decision relevant information regarding the nature and extent of hazard	Situational Awareness	P
<p>Ratings Definitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performed without Challenges (P): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. • Performed with Some Challenges (S): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws; however, opportunities to enhance effectiveness and/or efficiency were identified. • Performed with Major Challenges (M): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s), but some or all of the following were observed: demonstrated performance had a negative impact on the performance of other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers; and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. • Unable to be Performed (U): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were not performed in a manner that achieved the objective(s). 		

Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance

The following sections provide an overview of the performance related to each exercise objective and associated core capability, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Core Capability: Planning, Public Information and Warning; Operational Coordination; Situational Awareness;

Objectives:

- Discuss the capability to deliver, coordinated, prompt, reliable and actionable information to the whole community
- Discuss the capability to establish and maintain a coordinated and unified structure and process that integrates all stakeholders

- Discuss the capability to provide decision makers with decision relevant information regarding the nature and extent of hazard

The strengths and areas for improvement for each core capability aligned to this objective are described in this section.

Strengths

The structure of the exercise focused on a multimedia, facilitated format for the national players as well as Sacramento County players. This scenario, winter storm with warning and builds to a significant rain fall and heavy winds upwards of 80 mph gusts which causes significant effort and actions by the participating jurisdictions and agencies. The disciplines were well represented enabling quality discussion.

Top three strengths:

1. The exercise highlighted the depth of resources, skill sets and trained personnel internal to Sacramento County (including the cities) to handle a Winter Storm event.
2. The VTTX identified the capabilities of our partners and department personnel to respond to a Winter Storm event in Sacramento County and highlighted the existing partnership and ongoing emergency management coordination efforts with other local departments/agencies, particularly two neighboring cities.
3. The ICS system works very well in Sacramento County as the first responder community each knows their roles and responsibilities with on scene incident management and stakeholder integration.
4. The coordination of information from the field level to the individual DOC, EOC levels enabled the decision makers to receive vital information related to the event in a timely manner. It also proved to be efficient for the County and local Public Information Officers to relay accurate and timely information to the public, families and the media.

Areas for Improvement

Sacramento County participants altered the scenarios to fit their needs to ensure valuable learning for all and discussed the effects of a severe Winter Storm. There were multiple areas for improvement identified and are listed in the following:

- My need to be more focused for each VTTX and bring in the appropriate players such as Animal Care and Regulation in the case of this VTTX.
- Conduct Routine pre-event equipment checks in the EOC.
- Coordination internally on a Fuel Allocation and Distribution Plan
- Homeless Population care and sheltering integrations into the existing Care and Shelter Plan.
- Coordination with key Utilities within Sacramento County.

Analysis:

Overall participants expressed satisfaction with the exercise. There was total agreement by all participants that increased exercises of this nature, with the right scenario for the player and

appropriate players in the room would definitely continue to strengthen the capabilities of the Operational Area.

Participant Survey

Participants were asked to rank elements of the exercise on a five-point scale with 1 indicating strong disagreement with the statement and 5 indicating strong agreement. All participants (N=18) participated in the survey.

The exercise was well structured and organized	4.2
The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic	3.7
The multimedia presentation helped the participants understand and become engaged in the scenario.	3.7
The facilitator(s) was knowledgeable about the material, kept the exercise on target, and was sensitive to group dynamics	4.4
The situation manual used during the exercise was a valuable tool throughout the exercise.	3.9
Participation in the exercise was appropriate for someone in my position	3.9
The participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines	3.7

- It worked for the time allotted but would like to spend more time discussing potential and past issues that may happen again.
- If all attendees arrived, the discussion would improve. As it was, the participation was very good.
- Maybe use the white board more to see all the ideas that are being thrown out.
- I thought it was a very productive exercise. Props can always help, maybe photos/videos, etc.
- I would like to participate in more exercises.
- Good exercise
- Having a scenario that is more realistic to our area that the group doesn't need to figure out how to tweak it to spur the conversation.
- For the sake of time, the group of participants from Sacramento County though that calling out agencies to speak to their top 3 points from the discussion questions would help in keeping the attention for the other groups across the country, the questions should be summarized rather than all answered in detail.

APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This IP has been developed specifically for Sacramento County as a result of the Multi Casualty Incident VTTX. All corrective actions are entered into WebEOC for tracking over time.

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element ¹	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
Core Capability 1: Planning, Public Information and Warning; Operational Coordination; Situational Assessment.	Fuel Allocation and Distribution Plan	Convene a group to explore and develop a fuel allocations and distribution plan for the Operational Area.	Planning; Operational Coordination				
	Homeless Population Integration	Ensure the homeless care and sheltering in a winter storm event are integrated into the existing plan.	Planning; Operational Coordination, Situation Assessment				
	Technology in EOC	Ensure there is a routine checklist for pre-event technology equipment checks in the EOC.	Planning, Public Information and Warning; Critical Transportation; Operational Coordination; Mass Casualty Services; On scene Security, Protection and Law Enforcement; Public Health, Healthcare and Emergency Medical Services; Situational Assessment and Health and Social Services.				

¹ Capability Elements are: Planning, Organization, Equipment, Training, or Exercise.