

*Tennessee Emergency Management Agency*

# Tennessee T.E.S.T. Program

## Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates

# User Guide



## Introduction to the T.E.S.T. Program User Guide

This guide will instruct your agency on how to complete the exercise process from start to finish using the Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program materials. It has guidance on what needs to be done before the exercise, during the exercise, and once the exercise is complete. All accompanying materials are referenced in this guide with instructions for how to use or complete them with the understanding that all materials are flexible and editable. While many of the materials provided with the Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program are complete and ready-to-use, some exist as templates that are meant to be starting points. They can all be completed with a little effort and TEMA is always available to provide assistance at any point along the way.

T.E.S.T. Program resources can be found online at [tn.gov/tema/emergency-community/exercises](http://tn.gov/tema/emergency-community/exercises).

## Materials in your T.E.S.T. Program Package

The Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program provides everything necessary for completing a tabletop exercise from start to finish. The following is a list of the materials provided along with instructions on use and completion (if necessary).

User Guide <span style="float: right; font-size: small;">[This document]</span>	
The current document; how-to guide for the exercise process. Start the exercise process by reading and understanding this User Guide.	<b>For Use By:</b> Lead Exercise Planner  <b>Additional Work Required:</b> None

Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Scenario List	
A comprehensive list of all Exercise Scenario Templates this program offers. Each scenario is designed to test multiple functions. With this list in mind, the scenario used for the exercise should be chosen.	<b>For Use By:</b> Exercise Planning Team  <b>Additional Work Required:</b> None

Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Scenario PowerPoint Templates	
PowerPoint presentation templates containing the simulated hazard scenario used for the exercise. The presentations contain situational events with injects and can be modified to the extent determined by the exercise planners. This is what exercise participants will see during the exercise to prompt discussion.	<b>For Use By:</b> Exercise Planning Team and Exercise Participants  <b>Additional Work Required:</b> Moderate by Exercise Planning Team member(s)

TTX Planning Meeting Agenda Templates <span style="float: right; font-size: small;">[3 Templates: Initial, Final, &amp; After-Action]</span>	
Agenda templates for each of the planning meetings. The agendas include what major items to cover in each meeting and can be altered as desired. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Initial Planning Meeting Agenda Template</i></li> <li>• <i>Final Planning Meeting Agenda Template</i></li> <li>• <i>After-Action Meeting Agenda Template</i></li> </ul>	<b>For Use By:</b> Exercise Planning Team  <b>Additional Work Required:</b> None to Minimal



### Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Facilitator Guide

<p>Guidance and instructions for the individual who will be facilitating the exercise. They will use this document on the day of the exercise to assist their facilitation responsibilities but should read through the document well before exercise day.</p>	<p><b>For Use By:</b> Facilitator</p> <p><b>Additional Work Required:</b> Minimal to Moderate by the Exercise Planning Team</p>
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### Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Evaluator Form

<p>The exercise must be evaluated in order to benefit from it. The exercise evaluation forms will assist the evaluator(s) in documenting important information during the exercise. The forms should be altered to reflect the functional content areas you choose to evaluate.</p>	<p><b>For Use By:</b> Exercise evaluator(s)</p> <p><b>Additional Work Required:</b> Minimal by Exercise Planning Team.</p>
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### Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Participant Feedback Form

<p>This form captures feedback on how well the exercise went. It should be filled out by all those who attended the exercise to help the Exercise Planning Team gauge their success. The form provided can be used as is or altered to include additional items that the Exercise Planning Team would like feedback on.</p>	<p><b>For Use By:</b> Everyone involved</p> <p><b>Additional Work Required:</b> None to Minimal by the Exercise Planning Team.</p>
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### After-Action Report Template

<p>This document is the heart of the exercise process. It captures the key exercise outcomes including strengths, areas for improvement, lessons learned, and improvement plan items. This document will help turn the activity into tangible preparedness progress. The document is a template to be filled out following the exercise.</p>	<p><b>For Use By:</b> Exercise Planning Team, Improvement Planning Personnel</p> <p><b>Additional Work Required:</b> Extensive by Exercise Planning Team member(s) with Evaluator input.</p>
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### Corrective Action Template

<p>This document outlines emergency planning actions you have identified following the exercise. This template documents the resolution of gaps identified during the TTX exercise.</p>	<p><b>For Use By:</b> Exercise Planning Team, Improvement Planning Personnel</p> <p><b>Additional Work Required:</b> Extensive by Exercise Planning Team member(s) with Evaluator input.</p>
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### Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program User Feedback Form

<p>This form is where your agency can give us feedback on the quality of the Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program and materials. Any member of the Exercise Planning Team may fill this out. Submit to <a href="mailto:TEMA.Exercises@tn.gov">TEMA.Exercises@tn.gov</a> following the exercise process. Completing this will allow us (TEMA) to continue improving on the program and best support communities in their emergency preparedness efforts.</p>
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\*A generic Sign-in Sheet is also available to capture attendance during any phase of the exercise.

## Introduction to Tabletop Exercises and Emergency Preparedness

As part of the Governor’s School Safety Initiative, the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) has created the Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program. With a commitment to assisting those in our communities prepare for any disaster, we recognize exercising as a valuable preparedness activity.

The T.E.S.T. Program was created as an easy-to-use, complete, and expandable toolkit tailored for specific target audiences with the option of personalization to fit your goals. By the end of this process, you will improve your understanding of roles and responsibilities, strengthen partnerships with response agencies, and be better prepared for a real incident.

## The Emergency Preparedness Cycle

Emergency preparedness is a cyclical process which requires continuous integration of planning, training, exercising, and evaluating. The first step, planning, begins by creating or revising an emergency management plan. This is followed by training to understand the plan, exercising to test it, and evaluation to identify weaknesses in the planning or training phases. Upon completion of an exercise evaluation, take the lessons learned and use it to improve your plan, thus restarting the cycle.



The focus of the Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program, exercising, should be conducted when a robust plan has been created and staff are trained on the processes in the plan. If training has not yet occurred, start first with a workshop or seminar. The plan should be thoroughly reviewed prior to exercising in order to identify what the exercise is attempting to accomplish. The review should help you identify priority functional content areas to test, partners to include, and processes to evaluate.

Exercising is not done to test individuals; it exists to test the plans and procedures. Exercising is a way to assess your level of emergency preparedness by allowing personnel to practice their roles in an emergency and evaluate the effectiveness of your emergency response plan. A robust exercise program should include a variety of discussion-based and operation-based activities. An exercise program should use multiple exercises and drills in order to test all aspects of the emergency management plan, with each activity focusing on only a few aspects. Be sure to consider testing the validity of vendor and mutual aid agreements and to include representatives from emergency partner agencies.

### ***What is a Tabletop Exercise (TTX)?***

The Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program focuses on tabletop exercises (TTX); staged disasters where relevant personnel can openly discuss response actions specific to an emergency scenario in a low-stress learning environment. Tabletop exercises are an integral part of a much larger system of evaluation activities. The simulated format allows cooperative participation and communication without disrupting normal facility operations. TTXs assess current emergency plans by highlighting what areas are strong and what areas need improvement.

## Early Development of your Tabletop Exercise

### *Exercise Planning Team – Build your team with who will plan and prepare the exercise*

The organization conducting the exercise must first select members for the Exercise Planning Team. This team will tailor the scenario, determine the Functional Content Areas to evaluate, assign roles, invite outside partners, create an exercise timeline, and complete all materials and templates provided.

*Note: The planning team must NOT contain any personnel that will be participating in the exercise but should include those who are familiar with the processes and procedures followed by the participants.*

A Lead Planner should be assigned to direct and coordinate all planning activities. This individual will assign planning responsibilities, provide guidance, establish timelines, and monitor progress. Other members of the planning team could be responsible for logistics duties (obtain supplies, materials, facilities, and services for the exercise), administrative duties (coordinate team member schedules, correspond with partners, register participants on exercise day, write meeting minutes), and documentation duties (review and provide policies, procedures, and plans to analyze during exercise).

### *Tabletop Exercise Scenario – Choose one scenario from the provided TTX Scenario Templates*

The organization conducting the exercise (or the identified Exercise Planning Team) should review the *Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Scenario List* and determine which hazard scenario to use. A scenario should be selected which best evaluates the emergency functions or procedures the organization desires to evaluate. This step is recommended to be completed by the Exercise Planning Team prior to moving into the planning steps below.

## Planning your Tabletop Exercise

### *Initial Planning Meeting – Begin your planning with meeting to discuss planning efforts*

Begin by hosting an Initial Planning Meeting (IPM) with the Exercise Planning Team, where many of the following items will be discussed. See the *Initial Planning Meeting Agenda* for a better look at this meeting. The following steps must be addressed and completed prior to the exercise.

### *Exercise Scenario – Review and revise the selected TTX Scenario PowerPoint Template*

During the IPM, a review of the scenario should be done to orient the planning group with the exercise and to understand how the scenario will guide exercise participants towards discussion of the functions being tested. Each *TTX Scenario Template/PowerPoint* presentation is mostly complete with introduction slides, modules and injects, discussion questions, and areas to fill-in or revise. Make sure to discuss all the “fill-in” areas at this meeting which will be identified on the PowerPoint by **red font**.

The scenario is a great starting point, but it may be altered freely to suit your objectives. The purpose of the scenario is to state how a simulated event unfolds to lead exercise participants towards discussion points of the functional content areas. You may add or remove parts of the scenario as long as it still achieves this purpose. Visual aids such as maps and images can be added to enrich the presentation.

### *Schedule / Timeline – Develop to make efficient use of your time and ensure completion of tasks*

Create a timeline for all exercise events including scheduling of the meetings, task due dates, and the exercise date. Ensure that a realistic and reasonable amount of time is provided so there is enough time and for all items to be completed before the anticipated exercise date.

### ***Functional Content Areas – Review and revise the TTX Scenario Template to suit your objectives***

Each T.E.S.T. Program hazard scenario has been designed to test three (3) to four (4) functional content areas (FCAs). These are found on the “Functional Content Areas” slide in each *TTX Scenario Template/PowerPoint* presentation. The Exercise Planning Team should determine which and how many of the scenario’s FCAs to focus on and evaluate. When you have determined this, you may decide to alter the presentation or scenario accordingly. *For example, if you chose to focus only on the FCA “lockdown”, you may wish to add additional content or discussion questions into the active aggressor scenario to prompt extended discussion about your organization’s lockdown procedures.*

### ***Assign Exercise Roles – Define who will be involved and their role on exercise day***

#### **Facilitator (1)**

The exercise facilitator leads the participants through the exercise. They are responsible for ensuring that the discussion remains focused on the objectives and that all issues are thoroughly explored during the TTX.

*Note: Refer to the Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Facilitator Guide for more information and assistance with choosing a facilitator.*

#### **Evaluator(s) (1-4)**

Evaluators observe the exercise and take notes on how the participants addressed the FCAs. The evaluators do not have an active role in the exercise, but instead document the actions and decisions discussed by exercise participants. They should have some expertise or experience with the FCAs they are evaluating and be familiar with the policies and procedures referenced during the exercise.

The evaluators are crucial to the after-action review process and improvement plan. The *Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Evaluator Form* is to be filled out during the exercise by each evaluator. Determining how many evaluators to assign should be based on how many FCAs will be evaluated, but it is recommended that one evaluator does not evaluate more than two (2) FCAs.

#### **Participants**

Exercise participants are those that have an active role in discussing their regular roles and responsibilities during the simulated exercise. The actions of the exercise participants are discussed in response to the scenario and should address the FCAs of the exercise. Chose participants based on who would typically respond to the scenario being exercised, including the organization’s decision-makers or those officials that would have an active role in managing a disaster situation.

#### **Observers**

Observers take no part in the exercise, evaluating, or facilitating the exercise, they are simply there to observe it. They should view the exercise from a designated observation area. The decision to invite observers is up to you, and can include members of the media (with limited access), support staff, stakeholders, etc.

### ***Invite Outside Entities/Stakeholders – Identify and invite who will participate in your exercise***

Deciding which stakeholders from outside of your organization to involve in the exercise depends on your goals and your community. You may consider including a representative from:

- Law Enforcement
- Fire and Rescue
- Emergency Medical Services
- Local Hospitals
- Health Department
- Mental Health Professional(s)
- Emergency Management
- School District Officials
- Volunteer/Community partners
- Utility Providers
- Transportation Services
- And more...

This list is not exhaustive and there are many aspects to consider when deciding who to invite (including your Emergency Operations Plan, existing relationships, scenario being tested, and FCAs). *Note that not all partners need to be included in this TTX and can be included in later exercises.* Each *Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Scenario Template* contains a list of suggested partners to relevant to that incident type.

### ***Exercise Logistics - Discuss and develop a plan for materials and resources during your exercise***

Logistical decisions to discuss include exercise date, time, and location, food, drink, supplies, audio/visual equipment, and room requirements (including back-up systems in case). This also includes determining who will be responsible for procuring these needs. Consider supplies such as writing utensils, notepads, copies of plans, easels, and more.

### ***Exercise Materials - Review and prepare all exercise materials before to exercise day***

Determine what materials and resources are needed for your exercise. Assign planning team members to develop these materials. Ensure that the required materials are distributed to the appropriate persons when they are needed, including printing materials for the exercise. Additional materials that may be of use include:

- Maps of the area(s) around the exercise scenario location
- Copies of the existing Emergency Operations Plans and procedures for reference
- Fact sheets for the building/facility/exercise location
- Seating charts/name tags for the exercise participants
- Sign-in sheet or attendance roster
- Copies of the *Participant Feedback Form(s)* and *Evaluation Form(s)*
- Photographs of the exercise location to display around the room
- Table name cards for exercise participants, if desired

### ***Final Planning Meeting – Conduct a meeting to finalize all plans before exercise day***

The Final Planning Meeting (FPM) should be held to finalize and review all of the items above. This is the last opportunity for any changes in the materials to be made. Please see the *Final Planning Meeting Agenda* for more information. It is advisable to hold this meeting a couple of weeks before the exercise.

## Exercise Day - Preparing and Conducting

Conducting the exercise is where the actual learning and practice occurs. The performance on the exercise day is evaluated to bring about change, so it is important that it is conducted properly.

### ***Prepare the Space*** – Before the exercise starts, prepare the meeting space and resources

On the day of the exercise, it is important to have the space set-up in a manner conducive to collaboration between exercise participants and observation by evaluators. Exercise materials should be visible to all participants. Consider the following list of preparation items (this list does not include all considerations nor are all items mandatory, do what is best for your exercise):

- All documentation should be printed and ready to distribute
- Test Audio/Visual and electronic equipment to ensure it is in working order
- Create a sign-in/registration table with name badges
- Arrange tables; by functional content area, using name tents, in a U-shape, etc.
- Set-up an observation area for observers
- Clipboards for recording/evaluating
- Arrange supplies and visual materials around the room
- Conduct an abbreviated “dry-run” of the presentation

### ***Brief Exercise Personnel*** – Conduct a briefing so that all participants know the plan and their role

All individuals including participants, evaluator(s), and the facilitator should be briefed before the exercise on their roles and responsibilities as well as what’s expected of them for the exercise. Give evaluators and facilitators their required materials and brief them separate from the participants before the exercise begins. Participants will be briefed by the facilitator at the beginning of the exercise utilizing the first several slide of the selected *Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Scenario Template* presentation.

### ***Attendance*** – Document who participated in the exercise

The attendance of all individuals present, including their role, during the exercise should be documented and retained. A *Sign-In Sheet Template* is available as a part of this program package.

### ***Conduct the Exercise*** – The facilitator presents the exercise material and stimulates discussion

The *Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Facilitator Guide* provides detailed instructions for the facilitator.

## Post-Exercise Steps

When the exercise concludes, the evaluation and improvement process can begin. This is the process by which exercising translates into emergency preparedness improvement. At this stage, strengths and areas needing improvement are identified and action items are created to address those areas.

### ***Hot Wash*** – Conduct a conversation directly following the exercise to gain immediate feedback

Immediately following the exercise, the Facilitator should conduct a “hot wash.” This is an opportunity for all who attended the exercise to share their opinions on its success. This is a time to discuss how it went overall, identify initial successes and concerns, and gain a general level of participants’ satisfaction with the exercise. Notes should be taken by a member of the Exercise Planning Team during the hot wash. Each participant should complete a *Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Participant Feedback Form* which should be collected and analyzed.



### ***Debriefing - Planners, evaluators, and the facilitator meet to share observations***

Debriefing can either be held following the hot wash on the exercise day, or a few days following the exercise. This is a discussion forum for the Planners, Facilitator, and Evaluator(s) to share their observations and notes regarding the FCAs that were tested. Each individual at the debriefing is encouraged to share their observations for the FCAs they observed while both strengths and areas for improvement should be identified. Notes should be taken during the debriefing for inclusion into the after-action process.

### ***Exercise Evaluator Form – Exercise Evaluator complete documentation evaluating the exercise***

Information and feedback obtained from the evaluator(s) using the *Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Evaluator Form* is the building block of the after-action and improvement activity. The *Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Evaluator Form* is to be completed immediately after the exercise by each evaluator.

### ***After-Action Review – Develop and revise the provided template reflecting on your exercise***

The after-action review process produces a deliverable called an After-Action Report (AAR) this program provides you with an editable *After-Action Report Template* to reflect your exercise.

#### ***After-Action Report***

This document contains all necessary information for improving the emergency preparedness of your organization following what was learned in the exercise. This report provides participants with feedback on their performance, contains an improvement plan, and summarizes the entire exercise. An After-Action Report is to be completed by members of the Exercise Planning Team. An *After-Action Report Template* is provided in this program package.

#### ***After-Action Meeting***

Following the completion of the After-Action Report, planning team members, evaluators, and other key stakeholders should meet to discuss the After-Action Report. See the *After-Action Review Meeting Agenda Template* for more information. Schedule this meeting soon after the exercise to ensure that important details are not forgotten.

### ***Corrective Actions – Develop corrective action to address gaps identified and track their completion***

From the areas of improvement identified in the After-Action Report, create corrective actions/follow-up items that to further improve the organization's emergency response and preparedness. Corrective actions should be actionable such as updating a policy or plan, attend a training, etc. Track corrective actions up to completion, organizations can demonstrate that their efforts to improve emergency management processes have yielded tangible improvements. Organizations should assign appropriate individuals to be responsible for implementation of each specific corrective action. A *Corrective Action Template* is provided in this program package.

## **Confidentiality**

### ***All exercise documentation is sensitive information which should be protected.***

All exercise materials and supporting documentation (other than the unedited templates) is intended for official use only by the organization's staff, and local, county and state public safety officials. Use of this information for any purpose beyond its intended use is not authorized and release of the materials could compromise the safety and welfare of individuals. The completed exercise materials and supporting documentation may be considered protected from public records requests, consult with your organization's legal representation prior to releasing said information.

## Conclusion

It is important to continue monitoring the progress of the corrective actions identified in the AAR else risk losing the benefits of exercising. Remember that emergency preparedness is a cyclical process and does not stop with the completion of the exercise and associated improvement actions. Once all of the exercise steps are completed and the After-Action Report has been finalized, the preparedness cycle moves back into the “Plan” stage. Continue to improve your plan by incorporating lessons learned into your plan, then train your staff on the improved plan, then exercise and evaluate again.

Once the exercise process is complete, please remember to complete and submit the *Tabletop Exercise Scenario Templates (T.E.S.T.) Program User Feedback Form* to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency at [TEMA.Exercises@tn.gov](mailto:TEMA.Exercises@tn.gov) email so that we may continue to improve this program and do our part to making Tennessee a well-prepared and resilient community.

## Need Assistance?

The State of Tennessee offers many resources and a vast array of assistance in preparing for, mitigating the effects of, protecting against, preventing, and recovering from crisis and emergencies.

TEMA and other State partners are always available to provide assistance. Please reach out to the TEMA Exercise Branch at [TEMA.Exercises@tn.gov](mailto:TEMA.Exercises@tn.gov) email and we will work to answer your inquiry or route you to the correct subject matter expert.

***Thank you for your part in making Tennessee's disaster resilient!***

## Appendix A: Planning Steps for Tabletop Exercise

Early Exercise Development		
Step	Program Resource(s)	User Guide
1. Review the <i>User Guide</i> (this document) in its entirety.	<i>User Guide (this document)</i>	<i>N/A</i>
2. Select Exercise Planning Team members.		<i>Pg. 5</i>
3. Create the schedule and timeline for the exercise.		<i>Pg. 5</i>
4. Establish a target date for the exercise.		<i>Pg. 5</i>
5. Choose one (1) scenario which aligns with your objectives.	<i>Scenario List</i>	<i>Pg. 5</i>

Exercise Planning		
Step	Program Resource(s)	User Guide
6. Schedule Initial Planning Meeting.		<i>Pg. 5</i>
7. Conduct Initial Planning Meeting.	<i>Initial Planning Meeting Agenda</i>	<i>Pg. 5</i>
8. Review and revise the exercise material to fit your objectives.	<i>TTX PowerPoint Template(s)</i>	<i>Pg. 5</i>
9. Identify the Functional Content Areas (FCAs) you desire to test.		<i>Pg. 6</i>
10. Assign facilitator, evaluator, and observer (as needed) roles.		<i>Pg. 6</i>
11. Identify exercise participants and send invitations to those identified.		<i>Pg. 7</i>
12. Plan for the logistical needs of the exercise.		<i>Pg. 7</i>
13. Revise, develop, and prepare the exercise materials.		<i>Pg. 7</i>
14. Conduct the Final Planning Meeting.	<i>Final Planning Meeting Agenda</i>	<i>Pg. 7</i>

Exercise Day - Preparing and Conducting		
Step	Program Resource(s)	User Guide
15. Prepare the meeting space		<i>Pg. 8</i>
16. Document participation / attendance.	<i>Sign-In Sheet</i>	<i>Pg. 8</i>
17. Conduct a briefing.		<i>Pg. 8</i>
18. Run / conduct the exercise	<i>Facilitator's Guide</i>	<i>Pg. 8</i>

Post-Exercise		
Step	Program Resource(s)	User Guide
19. Conduct a hotwash.		<i>Pg. 8</i>
20. Conduct a debriefing.	<i>Scenario List</i>	<i>Pg. 9</i>
21. Each evaluator completes a Tabletop Exercise TTX Evaluator Form.	<i>TTX Evaluator Form</i>	<i>Pg. 9</i>
22. Each participant completes a Participant Feedback Form.	<i>TTX Participant Feedback Form</i>	<i>Pg. 8</i>
23. Develop and complete an After-Action Report.	<i>After-Action Report Template</i>	<i>Pg. 9</i>
24. Conduct an After-Action Meeting.	<i>After-Action Meeting Agenda</i>	<i>Pg. 9</i>
25. Finalize the After-Action Report, if revisions are necessary.	<i>After-Action Report Template</i>	<i>Pg. 9</i>
26. Develop a Corrective Action Plan and address identified gaps.		<i>Pg. 9</i>
27. Track the progress of corrective actions and lessons learned.		<i>Pg. 9</i>