



**GREATER KANSAS CITY
FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD**

KC RICE '12
**REGIONAL INTER-AGENCY
CONTINUITY EXERCISE**



**FULL-SCALE & TABLE TOP EXERCISE
AFTER ACTION REPORT**
CONDUCTED WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28-29, 2012

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

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I. Exercise Purpose

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise was to test the Federal Community's ability to activate, mobilize and commence initial emergency Continuity of Operations under guidance outlined in Federal Executive Branch (FEB) Federal Continuity Directive FCD-1, federal statutes, Executive Orders, and Agency plans. This was a NO-FAULT, non-attribution exercise. Findings will not be forwarded to outside Agencies, higher headquarters, state and local agencies, or the media. This exercise focused primarily on activation and conduct of Continuity of Operations Plan(s) from continuity facilities in response to notional events that affected the Kansas City metropolitan area.

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II. Scenario Overview

Purpose: To provide exercise participants with background information and a chronology of significant events that will lead-up to the day of the exercise. For the purpose of this exercise, participants operated under conditions for the following event-planning scenario:

The weather in the central section of the United States had been exceptionally cold during the winter of 2012-2013 with several days of sub-freezing temperatures occurring over the past few months. February has been especially cold with intermittent snowfall across the Kansas City metro area. Although frequent, the snow has not posed a significant problem to Kansas City or the surrounding communities. In the afternoon of February 25, 2013 the National Weather Service (NWS) announced that a very strong cold front from central Canada that arrived a few days ago was expected to bring more cold temperatures during the day at near freezing. Overnight the NWS predicted that temperatures would drop substantially. Additionally, rain is in the forecast and the NWS is predicting that the strong likelihood of an ice storm overnight.

Federal agencies in the Kansas City area, responding to this strong severe weather prediction, moved to activate their Continuity Plans in advance and planned to conduct Continuity operations beginning the next day, February 26.

III. Participating Agencies

Participating Agencies – FSE
Federal Aviation Administration
Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA Region VII
National Nuclear Safety Administration
Nation Weather Service – NLSC
National Weather Service – Central Region
Social Security Administration
Transportation Safety Administration
Participating Agencies – TTX
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service – National Benefits Center
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service – National Records Center
U.S. Department of Labor
Federal Railroad Administration
General Services Administration
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Farm Service Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture – GIPSA
U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Office Infrastructure Protection

Number of Participants:

Full Scale Exercise (FSE): 130 (deployed to participating agency Continuity Facilities/alternate locations) from 8 agencies

Table Top Exercise (TTX): 36 attendees from 10 agencies

KC RICE 2012 Exercise:

FSE: Tue., August 28, 2012
8 :00 am – 12:00 pm

TTX : Wed., August 29, 2012
8 :30 am – 1 :45 pm

Hot Wash : Wed., August 29, 2012
1 :30 pm – 3 :00 pm

IV. Exercise Objectives

FSE

1. Testing alert notification and activation procedures for continuity personnel and all other personnel.
2. Demonstrate capability to conduct MEFs from an alternate work location or from a telework location.
3. Demonstrate ability to execute agency continuity plans, including reconstitution and devolution planning.

TTX

1. Evaluate the ability to maintain Essential Functions.
2. Conduct and evaluate continuity facility operations.
3. Encourage and evaluate Interagency Communications.
4. Evaluate agency reconstitution plans and procedures.

V. Lessons Learned

Exercise Description

The National Weather Service reported that a severe winter storm would come through the Kansas City metropolitan area bringing with it a high probability of snow across the area as well as sub-freezing temperatures starting in the early evening of February 24, 2013. The forecast's high probability prompted the Kansas City FEB to recommend that Federal agencies in the Kansas City metro area activate Continuity Plans for the following morning. The exercise scenario goes out 30 days to allow MSEL injects that addressed reconstitution planning.

General Observations

- 25% of the deployed staff and support personnel from the [Agency] Coordination Center participated.
- [Agency] was able to successfully test all primary and backup communications systems. [Agency] used a new alert warning system in a recall notification test. Agency also successfully tested its MARS HF radio and satellite communications equipment.
- One agency reported its players were a bit confused on the scenario time line for the release of MSEL injects. The MSEL made two time jumps in order to advance the scenario and drive agencies to consider other elements of their Continuity plans.

Agency Strengths Observed

- Current plan provides structure required to facilitate and support COOP operations.
- During this COOP exercise all MEFs continued uninterrupted.
- All personnel assumed authorities as required by their assigned task.
- One agency noted that it was able to secure its site with back-up capabilities.
- [Agency] stated one of its strengths is having two alternate facilities. This year was the first year this agency exercised at their second alternate facility.

Agency Weaknesses Observed

- Looking to move current location of Continuity Facility to another location that would offer web access availability and minimize the movement of communication equipment.
- Require additional auxiliary power supplies for communications equipment and computers at the main Continuity Facility; essential during an extended power outage.
- All hard copy records created would require a Records Management Custodian in order to comply with current retention and destruction policies.
- During the TTX agencies tended to get wrapped up in their own issues and didn't have the big picture and have plans that rely on others (such as GSA) to quick fix problems instead of having robust plans.
- [Agency] is now researching the use of a "phone tree" system, where in an emergency like this the Site Manager is not making a lot of calls, instead calls the phone tree which will notify all employees and ERG members.

- [Agency] determined that its ERG members should have a hard copy of the Continuity Plan at home in the event of a multi-day power loss event.
- [Agency] said its Continuity Plan requires more details.

Conclusion

- **Items the Agencies will take away from the exercise**

- [Agency] will need to continue training with all essential personnel in Continuity procedure, setup, and operations.
- Need to continue monthly test of auxiliary communications equipment.
- Research additional opportunities for using new alert warning system during extreme weather events and the COOP notification process.
- [Agency] stated that its ERG members needed more training on how to tether with BlackBerry and iPhones and to use their VPN application during remote situations.
- Continuity planning is ongoing.

- **How could the Exercise get better?**

- Have MSEL inject play that involves the testing of secure communications equipment.
- Agency component heads and staff should receive more education about Continuity to prepare for the exercise.

- **Additional Comments**

- Training need in Continuity planning exceeds what the exercise format can deliver. The exercise format doesn't allow for opportunity to engage more people.
- Many of the agencies that participated in the TTX have a huge need to understand and develop devolution plans and procedures; there seems to be a general ignorance of that piece of the COOP puzzle.
- Exercise participants seemed unaware of the importance of situational awareness in drawing up operational plans and conducting real-world missions.
- The TTX exercise was well written. The discussion points really drew out discussion from participants.

Participant Observations

Each participant was asked to complete a Participant Feedback Form provided in both the Player Guides for the FSE and TTX. The participant feedback responses are as follows:

FSE

Number of respondents: **21** (note not all respondents replied to every question)

Highlights of participant responses:

1. How much knowledge of Continuity of Operations Plan(s) and your role during continuity activation did you have prior to the exercise?
 - 9/21 (43%) of respondents reported they nearly all the knowledge or had most of the knowledge
 - 7/21 (33%) reported they had some knowledge
2. How prepared were you for the exercise?
 - 11/21 (52%) of respondents reported they were completely prepared
 - 8/21 (38%) reported they were moderately prep
3. How did the exercise affect your understanding of Continuity of Operations Plan(s) and your role during continuity activation?
 - 16/21 (76%) of respondents reported a very positive effect.
 - 4/21 (19%) reported a somewhat positive effect
4. How well did you understand the exercise's objectives listed?
 - 15/21 (71%) of respondents reported a complete understanding
 - 5/21 (24%) reported a moderate understanding
5. How well did the exercise meet the stated objectives?
 - 12/21 (57%) of respondents reported all of its objectives
 - 7/21 (33%) reported many of its objectives
6. How helpful were the exercise materials and information you were provided before and during the exercise?
 - 12/21 (57%) of respondents reported extremely helpful
 - 7/21 (33%) reported moderately helpful
7. How would you rate the amount of time allowed for the exercise?
 - 17/21 (81%) of respondents reported just enough time
8. How well organized was the exercise?
 - 15/21 (71%) of respondents reported extremely well organized
9. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the exercise play and your ability to receive exercise action items in a timely and accurate manner. (scale of 1 - 5)
 - 10/19 (57%) of respondents ranked this questions as "4" – Extremely well organized
 - 6/19 (32%) ranked this question as "3" – Moderately organized
10. Considering all of the expectations you may have had about the exercise, to what extent has the exercise met your expectations?
Range of 10: 1 = Falls short of expectations, 10 = Exceeded expectations
 - 3/19 (16%) of respondents ranked the exercise as a "9"
 - 7/19 (37%) ranked the exercise as a "7"
 - 7/24 (29%) ranked the exercise as a "8"

TTX

Number of respondents: **26** (note not all respondents replied to every question)

Highlights of participant responses:

11. How much knowledge of Continuity of Operations Plan(s) and your role during continuity activation did you have prior to the exercise?
 - 13/26 (50%) of respondents reported they nearly all the knowledge or had most of the knowledge
 - 11/26 (42%) reported they had some knowledge
12. How prepared were you for the exercise?
 - 7/26 (27%) of respondents reported they were completely prepared
 - 10/26 (38%) reported they were moderately prep
13. How did the exercise affect your understanding of Continuity of Operations Plan(s) and your role during continuity activation?
 - 18/26 (69%) of respondents reported a very positive effect.
 - 8/26 (31%) reported a somewhat positive effect
14. How well did you understand the exercise's objectives listed?
 - 17/26 (65%) of respondents reported a complete understanding
 - 7/26 (27%) reported a moderate understanding
15. How well did the exercise meet the stated objectives?
 - 17//26 (65%) of respondents reported all of its objectives
 - 9/26 (35%) reported many of its objectives
16. How helpful were the exercise materials and information you were provided before and during the exercise?
 - 19/26 (73%) of respondents reported extremely helpful
 - 6/26 (23%) reported moderately helpful
17. How would you rate the amount of time allowed for the exercise?
 - 22/24 (92%) of respondents reported just enough time
18. How well organized was the exercise?
 - 22/25 (88%) of respondents reported extremely well organized.
19. This question did not apply to TTX participants.
20. Considering all of the expectations you may have had about the exercise, to what extent has the exercise met your expectations?

Range of 10: 1 = Falls short of expectations, 10 = Exceeded expectations

 - 2/24 (<1%) of respondents ranked the exercise as a "10"
 - 9/24 (38%) ranked the exercise as a "9"
 - 7/24 (29%) ranked the exercise as a "8"

Comments:

- Need to approach COOP as a TEAM
- Need to develop a Devolution Plan
- Need to map process (of conducting Continuity operations)
- Alternate site needs to be outside the (power) grid
- Shortfalls identified in devolution, vital records, and map processes
- Need to identify a devolution site
- Plan focus too much on Continuity and not on reconstitution planning
- Our office needs to “practice” more often
- Need to account for special needs employees
- Plan deficient in orders of succession planning
- Shortfall in availability of computers at home in the event of an emergency
- Lack of awareness of Continuity planning by first-level employees
- Plan needs regular updating
- Family emergency planning required

Comments on future exercise design:

- Put more “twists and turns” into the scenario in order to make agencies really have to plan
- Incorporate human capital, administrations/HR functions (payroll/time)
- Create scenarios that take away the telework capability; too many just assume we will telework in all situations
- Include more employees who will perform essential functions
- Have participants come from all levels of the organization
- This was the best exercised I have attended yet