



Kansas City RICE '11 Full Scale Continuity Exercise After Action Report (AAR)

*Kansas City Federal Executive Board
FEMA Region VII*

May 18, 2011



FEMA



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2. The information gathered in this AAR is unclassified; however, reproduction of this document, in whole or in part, without prior approval from FEMA Region VII is discouraged.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kansas City Federal Executive Board (FEB) and FEMA Region VII executed KC RICE '11 on May 18, 2011. This full scale exercise tested agencies' continuity capabilities. The scenario was an earthquake based scenario that built on the National Level Exercise (NLE) '11 exercise, which took place simultaneously.

The objectives for KC RICE '11 were as follows:

- Objective 1: Testing alert notification and activation procedures for continuity personnel and all other personnel.
- Objective 2: Demonstrate intra-agency and interagency communications capabilities.
- Objective 3: Demonstrate ability to execute agency reconstitution planning.
- Objective 4: Demonstrate capability to conduct MEFs from an alternate work location or from a telework location.

This report will analyze exercise results, identify strengths agencies should maintain, identify areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

Major Strengths

Each agency reported their individual strengths and areas for improvement following the exercise. Using each agency's report, several common strengths and areas for improvement were identified. The major strengths identified during this exercise are as follows:

- Many participating agencies stated that they were able to identify gaps in their plan during this exercise.
- Several agencies reported that their alert notification procedures were highly effective.
- Some agencies reported that their telework procedures went smoothly.

Primary Areas for Improvement

The primary areas for improvement, including recommendations, are as follows:

- Many agencies cited continuity communications as an area for improvement.
- Several agencies reported the need for improvement in accountability procedures.
- Several agencies stated that more emphasis should be placed on their staff's personal preparedness plans.

Overall, Kansas City RICE '11 was deemed a success by all involved. Many agencies stated that they had a list of action items for improving their continuity capabilities immediately following the exercise. Many agencies also recognized the need for further Tests, Training, and Exercise (TT&E) in order to further improve on their procedures. Several agencies expressed interest in participating in future installments of KC RICE.

SECTION 1: EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Details

Exercise Name

KC RICE '11

Type of Exercise

Full Scale Exercise

Exercise Date

May 18, 2011

Duration

4 hours

Location

Various locations in the Kansas City, MO metropolitan area

Sponsor

FEMA Region VII and the Kansas City Federal Executive Board

Program

Continuity Programs

Capabilities

- Planning
- Communications
- Intelligence and information sharing and dissemination
- Continuity Facility Management
- Economic and Community Recovery

Scenario Type

Earthquake – New Madrid Seismic Zone

Exercise Design Team

The design team for KC RICE '11 consisted of:

David Teska, FEMA Region VII

Tom Magee, GSA

Karen Grissom, USDA/RMA

Kenny Decker, SRA (contract support)

Participating Organizations

Participating Agencies
General Services Administration
NOAA/National Logistics Support Center

USDA/Farm Service Agency
USDA/Risk Management Agency
DHS/UCIS/National Benefits Center
USDA National Information Technology Center
Federal Railroad Administration
National Archives and Records Administration
US District Courts, Western MO
Transportation Security Administration
US Treasury - Financial Management Service
Social Security Administration
Federal Transit Administration
NOAA/Central Region Headquarters

SECTION 2: EXERCISE DESIGN SUMMARY

Kansas City RICE is an annual full-scale continuity exercise. In 2011, many agencies used NLE '11 as their annual continuity exercise. Therefore, KC RICE '11 was smaller in size and scope than it has been in past years.

The exercise was conducted simultaneously with NLE '11. The exercise design team used the NLE scenario as the basis for KC RICE '11. The scenario details an earthquake that has occurred along the New Madrid fault. The earthquake described in the NLE '11 scenario would cause minor damage in Kansas City. The damage that is outlined in the KC RICE '11 scenario was therefore cited as an artificiality.

The KC RICE design team tapped into exercise materials used for NLE '11. Agency lead controllers received access to the Emergency Management System Enterprise. This system allowed agencies to view the Virtual News Network (VNN) that NLE '11 used for synthetic situational awareness.

In order to stay consistent with the NLE '11 timeline, the initial earthquake and alert notification testing took place on the morning of Monday, May 16. Exercise play resumed with the STARTEX at 8:00 am on Wednesday, May 18.

Exercise 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. The exercise also heavily examined reconstitution procedures.

Exercise Objectives

KC RICE '11 was designed to provide agency personnel with an opportunity to demonstrate their familiarity with continuity plans and procedures and to demonstrate the agency's capability to continue its essential functions. The exercise focused on all elements of a viable continuity capability, with a focus in several specific areas. There was a heavy focus placed on reconstitution. The following were the objectives for KC RICE '11:

- Objective 1: Testing alert notification and activation procedures for continuity personnel and all other personnel.
- Objective 2: Demonstrate intra-agency and interagency communications capabilities.
- Objective 3: Demonstrate ability to execute agency reconstitution planning.
- Objective 4: Demonstrate capability to conduct MEFs from an alternate work location or from a telework location.

Scenario Summary

The KC RICE '11 scenario was based on the scenario used for NLE '11. An earthquake of

magnitude 7.7 occurs in Northeastern Kansas along the New Madrid fault. There is severe damage in the area very close to the epicenter, especially in the population center of Memphis, TN. It's stated that there is considerable damage within a 400 mile radius of the epicenter.

Rather than describing the damages to each agency's primary facility in Kansas City, the Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) contained generic injects so that each agency responded to identical damages. The design team encouraged each agency lead controller to create agency-specific injects unique to their own missions and continuity procedures that they would deliver throughout the exercise.

May 16, 2011 – Alert and Notification

The initial earthquake of magnitude $M_w=7.7$ occurred on the morning of Monday, May 16, with an epicenter near Marked Tree, AR. There is considerable damage in Kansas City, including structural damage to many buildings. Damaged infrastructure is also causing transportation difficulties and power outages. Due to uncertainties in the structural stability of each primary facility, agencies activate their continuity plans. It is at this time that agencies tested their activation procedures, including alert and notification, as well as any accountability procedures that are in place. Once activation procedures were completed, exercise play was paused until the STARTEX on the morning of May 18.

Note: The fact that some agencies' alternate facilities may also be subject to considerable damage from the earthquake was also cited as an exercise artificiality.

May 18, 2011 – The Exercise

Exercise play continued at 9:00 am on Wednesday, May 18. Agencies were given a series of injects that prompted them to test various continuity capabilities (communications tests, access to vital records, employee accountability, etc.) The damages to the primary facility are described in further detail. Damages are such that the facility will be available for use in the future, but will take weeks to repair. It's stated that several aftershocks have hampered repairs to damaged infrastructure. Power is still out in pockets of Kansas City, and the entire area is under a boil-water advisory. In addition, the grocery stores that have survived the earthquake are struggling to keep up with the increased demand for essential supplies.

The scenario then shifted focus to reconstitution considerations. Agencies were prompted with a series of injects that focused on moving back into the primary facility, and returning to business as usual. Exercise play concluded at 12:00 pm.

Post-Exercise Activities

Immediately following the exercise, each agency held an internal hot wash. The hot wash was an opportunity for participants to report on what went well, and to identify areas for improvement. Participants were also provided with feedback forms to be forwarded for analysis by the exercise design team.

At 1:30 pm, agency lead controllers and members of the exercise design team reconvened via

teleconference for an interagency hot wash. Also present were any evaluators and leadership from agencies who wished to participate. Each agency was given several minutes to report on strengths and areas for improvement following the exercise. Agencies also were given the opportunity to provide feedback on overall exercise design and organization.

Agencies were allowed one week to submit their feedback forms electronically. Feedback forms and information collected during the interagency hot wash form the basis for this AAR.

SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF OBJECTIVES

This section lists the primary strengths and areas for improvement that were observed in KC RICE '11. While each agency should develop their own list of lessons learned and recommendations, this section summarizes the most common observations that were reported in participant feedback and during the interagency hot wash.

Objective 1: Testing alert notification and activation procedures for continuity personnel and all other personnel.

Discussion: Alert & notification testing occurred on the morning of Monday, May 16, simultaneous with the start of NLE '11. Following the initial alert & notification, exercise play was paused until the morning of Wednesday, May 18.

Strengths

- Many agencies reported that their alert notification procedures were effective.
- Many agencies stated that they had a good response rate on their initial alert and notification.

Areas for Improvement

- Many agencies reported that contact information in their calling trees needed to be updated.

Recommendations

- Agencies should develop a process for periodically updating information on calling trees/alert notification rosters.

Objective 2: Demonstrate intra-agency and interagency communications capabilities.

Discussion: As KC RICE '11 was relatively small in size and scope, interagency communication was limited, although some were able to test their external communications. Recommendations for methods of encouraging interagency communications during exercise play have been documented for future use.

Intra-agency communication was a major focal point of the exercise. Several injects drove agencies to test their ability to keep all ERG and non-ERG employees informed. All agencies recognized the need for backup communications systems in a scenario similar to the one presented in KC RICE '11.

Strengths

- Several agencies reported that they had robust backup communication abilities.
- Some agencies stated that they had successful communication with key external partners.

Areas for Improvement

- Some agencies stated that communication with staff needs to be addressed in their plan.

- Some agencies also recognized the need to improve their accountability procedures.
- A representative from the FEB stated that they didn't know the location of most agencies throughout exercise play.
- Some agencies reported IT difficulties at their alternate site, or connectivity issues from a telework location.

Recommendations

- Agencies should ensure that they have clear communications procedures outlined in their continuity plans for keeping ERG and non-ERG staff informed.
- The FEB should further investigate options for tracking agencies during a continuity event.
 - It was suggested in the hot wash that agencies report to their location and contact information to the FEB as part of standard operating procedures.
- Agencies should regularly test their IT systems and telework procedures that are relied on in a continuity event.

Objective 3: Demonstrate ability to execute agency reconstitution planning.

Discussion: The majority of exercise play in KC RICE '11 simulated continuity operations during the recovery phase, several days after the initial event. The scenario drove participants to consider their reconstitution procedures. Most agencies did not report back on their reconstitution procedures. Many agencies, however, made observations related to their operations several days to several weeks into a continuity event.

Strengths

- Some agencies contacted GSA during the exercise in order to validate their communications procedures and to solidify their understanding of the reconstitution process.
- Some agencies stated that they have contact information for a primary facility manager.

Areas for Improvement

- Many agencies commented that they need to improve their stock of supplies for a continuity event, including food, water, basic building supplies, and resources for completing essential functions (e.g. fuel, office supplies, etc.).

Recommendations

- Given the possibility of a supply shortage such as the one presented in this exercise, agencies should consider what supplies are necessary for continuity operations in a period up to 30 days.
- Agencies should ensure that reconstitution is addressed in their continuity plans. At the very least, a reconstitution manager should be designated.

Objective 4: Demonstrate capability to conduct MEFs from an alternate work location or from

a telework location.

Discussion: Aside from the focus in reconstitution and communications, KC RICE '11 was designed to provide agencies with an opportunity to test and validate their overall continuity procedures. Agencies identified a wide range of strengths and areas for improvement for their overall continuity capability.

Strengths

- Several agencies reported that they were able to successfully access all vital records necessary for continuation of essential functions.
- Several agencies stated that they are well setup for telework, which has greatly added to their continuity capability.
- Some agencies reported that they have clear orders of succession in place.
- Several agencies stated that they are well prepared for a continuity event.

Areas for Improvement

- Many agencies stated there is a need to educate all employees on their roles and responsibilities in a continuity event.
 - This includes ensuring that employees have a personal/family preparedness plan.
- While some agencies reported that orders of succession are in place, several agencies stated that further training is necessary for successors.

Recommendations

- Agencies should conduct further TT&E to ensure all employees are aware of their role in a continuity event.
- Agencies should stress the importance of personal preparedness to all employees.
- Agencies should train successors on their roles and responsibilities.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

KC RICE '11 was deemed a success by all who participated. Many agencies stated that the exercise was a useful training activity. As a result, all participating agencies were able to cite areas for improvement in their continuity capability. Many agencies also expressed a desire to participate in future installments of KC RICE.

Many participants provided valuable feedback for the exercise design team. Many agencies stated that having access to the VNN used in NLE '11 enhanced exercise play. Some agencies, however, stated that they had difficulty using the exercise blog. Another common statement was that some value was lost in conducting the interagency hot wash via teleconference. The full list of recommendations and this after action report will be the basis for future versions of KC RICE.

As an overarching takeaway, KC RICE '11 emphasized the importance of addressing reconstitution in continuity plans, the need to update pertinent information in the plan periodically, and the need to train all employees on their roles and responsibilities in a continuity event.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

This section summarizes the feedback provided by participants in KC RICE '11. Some percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. How much knowledge of Continuity of Operations Plan(s) and your role during continuity activation did you have prior to exercise? (circle one)

1%	21%	31%	46%	0%
1	2	3	4	5
None of the knowledge	Some of the knowledge	Most of the knowledge	Nearly all of the knowledge	Not applicable

2. How prepared were you for the exercise? (circle one)

1%	12%	46%	40%	0%
1	2	3	4	5
Not prepared at all	Somewhat prepared	Moderately prepared	Completely prepared	Not applicable

3. How did the exercise affect your understanding of Continuity of Operations Plan(s) and your role during continuity activation? (circle one)

1%	1%	36%	58%	3%
1	2	3	4	5
Very negative effect	Somewhat negative effect	Somewhat positive effect	Very positive effect	Not applicable

4. How well did you understand the exercise's objectives listed in paragraph I. of this study guide? (circle one)

0%	6%	21%	67%	6%
1	2	3	4	5
No understanding	Some understanding	Moderate understanding	Complete understanding	Not applicable

5. How well did the exercise meet the stated objectives? (circle one)

1%	7%	45%	40%	6%
1	2	3	4	5
None of its objectives	Some of its objectives	Many of its objectives	All of its objectives	Not applicable

6. How helpful was the exercise materials and information you were provided before and during the exercise? (circle one)

2%	2%	32%	64%	0%
1	2	3	4	5
Not at all helpful	Somewhat helpful	Moderately helpful	Extremely helpful	Not applicable

7. How would you rate the amount of time allowed for the exercise? (circle one)

0%	7%	15%	78%	0%
1	2	3	4	5
Much less time than needed	Somewhat less time than needed	A little less time than needed	Just enough time	Not applicable

8. How well organized was the exercise? (circle one)

0%	6%	19%	75%	0%
1	2	3	4	5
Not at all organized	Somewhat organized	Moderately well organized	Extremely well organized	Not applicable

9. Off-Site Exercise Execution – Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the exercise play and you ability to successfully receive the exercise action items in a timely and accurate manner.

0%	6%	28%	65%	2%
1	2	3	4	5
Not at all organized	Somewhat organized	Moderately well organized	Extremely well organized	Not applicable

10. Considering all of the expectations you may have had about the exercise, to what extent has the exercise met your expectations? (circle one number below)

Falls Short of Expectations

Exceeded Expectations

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Average Response: 7.44

APPENDIX B: ACRONYMS

Table F.1: Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
AAR	After Action Report
ENDEX	End Exercise
ERG	Emergency Relocation Group
FEB	Federal Executive Board
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
MEF	Mission Essential Function
MSEL	Master Scenario Events List
NLE	National Level Exercise
RICE	Regional Interagency Continuity Exercise
STARTEX	Start Exercise
TCL	Target Capabilities List
TT&E	Test, Training, and Exercise
VNN	Virtual News Network