

Conducting an Input-Response Exercise

Task: Hold a full-day, pre-notified input-response exercise, testing all aspects of crisis management and crisis communications. Conduct an after action review following the exercise and schedule follow up training immediately after to solve problems while they're top of mind.

- Establish the overall objectives and detailed aims of the full-day input-response crisis management simulation exercise.
- Earmark teams in the emergency response organization (including those in the Crisis Management Center and Crisis Communications Center) and relevant external agencies who will participate in the exercise.
- Select the Exercise Control (ExCon) staff, assign them the roles they will play and designate an ExCon Coordinator.
- Choose the initial exercise scenario and evolve it with a 'devil's advocate' mindset.
- Divide the exercise into appropriate phases in accordance with the time available.
- Consider inserting a midway exercise 'time jump' (of 48 to 60 hours) so that not only the initial 'golden hour' period is played, but also follow-up initiatives and facilities. For example, the Incident Management Center and Family Assistance Center can be implemented/established.
- Write an Exercise Directive and ensure exercise participants receive it 7-10 days before exercise day.
- Ensure that a detailed program (with timings) for the exercise day is incorporated into the Exercise Directive.
- Write an Exercise Telephone Directory.
- Write the exercise 'film manuscript' – Main Input List (MIL) – which contains all the detailed inputs and precise timings played by ExCon to exercise players. These can include official information, news headlines, and even social media posts that will prompt your team to make decisions.
- Distribute the Main Input List, any Paper Inputs and Exercise Telephone Directory only to the ExCon staff 48 hours before the ExCon briefing.
- Hold an ExCon briefing 24 hours before exercise day.
- Distribute the Exercise Telephone Directory to all exercise players immediately before the start of the exercise.
- Incorporate a press conference in the exercise program (often done at the end).
- Carry out debriefings and subsequently collect written feedback from the exercising teams.
- Write and publish a post exercise report (PXR), which includes any detailed recommendations for improvement.
- Plan and carry out follow-up crisis management training as appropriate.