

# Appendix O—Hosting an Exercise (Training)

By considering our roles during a disaster, we can prepare, respond, and recover faster and more effectively. Exercises are one way that neighbourhoods can practice this in advance. They provide opportunities to connect socially, build trust, and collectively solve problems. Exercises are hands-on training opportunities, and while role-playing can sometimes feel awkward, it helps us build muscle memory for stepping into the roles needed and solving problems at the neighbourhood level.

There are two main types of exercises:

1. **Tabletop:** These can literally be done around a kitchen table or in a more formal setting. Participants talk through the step-by-step actions they would take in a real-life situation. Tabletops are low-stress ways to discuss and clarify roles and responsibilities and to highlight gaps in existing plans. These types of exercises are a great way to start familiarizing yourselves with the functions of your NEPP plan. They can be done in 30 minutes or more, depending on the level of detail you want to get into.
2. **Functional:** These are on-the-ground exercises. Rather than talking through step-by-step actions, participants practice the actions of setting up, getting organized, and playing the roles they have volunteered for, as if the real-life situation has taken place. These exercises take more time and resources and can require more planning to execute. Functional exercises usually run an hour or two so participants can get comfortable in their roles.

We recommend starting with a tabletop exercise first. Once you have done this, you may want to plan a larger functional exercise.

For either exercise you will use a scenario that describes a particular emergency that will help you work through the different roles, responsibilities, and functions. These do not have to be too detailed, and you can design them yourself. An earthquake scenario has been included here for you to use.

## Opening the exercise

Open your exercise by providing participants with an overview of what to expect. To change up the exercise, you can choose different times, such as immediately after the disaster or a week after. In addition to providing an overview of the exercise, have a brief icebreaker discussion to help frame the exercise. Below are questions around response and recovery that can be used as icebreakers for the group.

**Response:** Response is a short, focused phase that begins immediately after disaster strikes and is completed when the situation is stable.

**Recovery:** Recovery happens alongside response in a disaster and continues on afterwards for weeks, maybe even months or years. Recovery is the process of people coming together to help their neighbours and community become whole again—socially, physically, and economically. We often do not plan for recovery in advance, but recovery is our opportunity to build a stronger, healthier, happier, more resilient community.

**Scenarios:** While every disaster is different, response teams will typically have to address these core needs:

- Shelter
- Food
- Water
- Power
- Medical
- Waste and sanitation
- Communication and coordination
- Emotional and psychological

We are often tempted to plan for the worst-case scenario, but this can sometimes overwhelm people to the point where they find it hard to take positive action. We don't want to scare people away from planning and preparing. So, we suggest running exercises using scenarios that encourage problem solving and solutions to moderate impacts (at least to start). You can do this either by controlling the type of emergency your exercise is based on (for example, heat wave or moderate earthquake), or by explicitly suggesting response needs. For example, your scenarios may require you to work on these needs:

- shelter 10 people for three days,
- feed 20 people for three days,
- get clean drinking water for 30 people for three days,
- manage waste and sanitation for part of the neighbourhood,
- check on 10 people who are homebound and need external support, and
- coordinate and communicate the above.

You can use the following scenario for your NEPP exercise. Don't feel the need to go through everything. If one question raises a lot of conversation, as long as it is productive, let it flow. You can always cover other items in future exercises.

## Earthquake scenario

A magnitude 7.3 earthquake has struck the Comox Valley. Bridges, roads, and telecommunications systems are impacted. Fires have broken out across the region, and some buildings have collapsed. Downed power lines and broken gas lines have left hazards in streets. Access in and out of the neighbourhood as well as movement within the neighbourhood are limited by debris.

- Families are trying to reunite, but cellular communication is unreliable.
- People are unable to access city water and have limited food supplies.
- Shaking and fires have damaged many commercial buildings along arterial roads.
- Many streets are blocked by debris or downed power lines, limiting travel.
- 15 per cent of residential units are no longer safe to occupy.
- Infrastructure has sustained moderate damage—water mains broken, sewer lines damaged, power and natural gas disruptions.
- There are periodic communications outages—loss of cellular networks, landlines.
- Aftershocks are expected, likely causing additional damage to buildings.

### Needs and offers

Use specific examples of needs and offers of community members to guide and prioritize activities. Choose from:

#### Needs

- Akiko's young children are stuck at school four miles away. She doesn't own a car. She is desperate to get in touch with her kids, but no one is answering the school phone. She needs help reaching them.
- Hussein lives alone at home. He has mobility challenges and requires a walker to leave his home. He needs help getting food and water.
- Fen Wan just moved to the valley and English is not her first language. She is having trouble understanding what is happening in the neighbourhood and what services might be available.
- Danielle is a single mother with two children. Her child care has been disrupted, and she needs help with child care while she finds food and water for her family and performs basic repairs on her home.
- Aaliyah has a two-month-old baby. Her partner is away for work. She wants company and emotional support.
- The Singh family's home has suffered some damage—mainly broken windows and small cracks in the walls. They are not sure if it is safe for them to stay there.
- Micah is concerned about his neighbour. She is an older woman who lives alone but has seemed intimidated by Micah in the past, so he wants someone else to come with him to check on her.

- Jerry has run out of food for his dog, Fluffy. The local pet store is closed due to the emergency event, and Jerry is wondering if anyone else can share their dog food.
- Lucy and Norah have arrived at the meeting place alone. They are 8 and 10 years old. They aren't sure where their parents are and are scared.
- Luisa has been told her home isn't safe to enter. She needs to find a place to stay.
- Nancy's toilet is not working. Sewage pipes leading to her home are broken. She needs help setting up a portable toilet or creating a backyard latrine.
- Ali is a senior who has trouble walking. He is afraid to leave his home in case he falls.
- Li Wei has run out of food in his home and needs help accessing food supplies.
- Susan is trying to get in touch with her family, but her cell phone is out of batteries. She needs a power source to charge it.

## Offers

These neighbours have items or skills and want to know how they can help.

- Bob has his amateur radio license and radio equipment.
- Jorge works for a local construction company.
- Arjun and Ariel are teenagers from the neighbourhood.
- Katie is a skilled tradesperson.
- Melissa is a retired nurse who can help with first aid and medical support.
- Alejandra is a local parent who organizes school activities every year.
- Rosie is a therapist who wants to provide emotional support to people who need it.
- Yoshi is a local chef who has a commercial kitchen and propane BBQ.
- Isabel has an extra bedroom in her home.
- Jing is a local community organizer.
- Rachel is a local artist.
- Ian runs a local community garden and is offering two boxes of fresh produce.
- Leigh is an avid outdoorsperson with camping supplies and wants to know if anyone needs a tent or sleeping bag.
- Amanda speaks Cantonese and Mandarin and is offering to translate information to community members.

## Exercise prompts

In addition to the Needs and Offers on the previous pages, select several of the prompts below to guide the exercise.

### General activation and operations

- You have just arrived at the meeting place. What are the first priorities?
- Who will take on what roles?
- What information do you need at this point? Where would you get it?
- How will you prioritize and track tasks?
- What equipment or materials will you need and where will you find them?
- Who might need information from you? What type of information would they need, and how would you provide it?
- How are you going to coordinate ongoing staffing?

### Vulnerable individuals

- Who are the vulnerable individuals in your neighbourhood? If you don't know, how can you find out? How will you reach them? How will you support them?

### Shelter

- Where can people find shelter in your neighbourhood?

### Food and water

- Are there disruptions to food and water? Where might those be? Where can you source alternatives for food and water?

### Transportation

- What is your transportation strategy given conditions of roads and sidewalks?
- What options are there to help people be self-sufficient? Consider clearing sidewalks and gathering mobility supplies. Ride share where possible and necessary.
- What transportation assets (for example, motor vehicles, walking paths, bicycles, etc.) are available for transporting people and goods (for example, food, water, first aid supplies).

## Communication

- How are people informed and coordinated? Are there people without access to phones or internet? Who might need to receive information in person?
- How will you inform people about available services; help people communicate with their family; or coordinate and connect people to shelter and heat, food and water, medical support and transportation?
- How might you communicate with the local Emergency Operations Centre? What kind of information might they want?

## Finishing an exercise

Consider ending each exercise with a BBQ or potluck, and take time to celebrate both your neighbourhood's increased preparedness as well as stronger social connections!