

Best Management Practices for Colleges and Universities



Preparedness & Security

Tabletop Exercises

Updated January 2007

Summary: After September 11, many colleges and universities realized that their emergency response plans needed either to be updated or expanded. To begin to evaluate their emergency response plans, mock drills or tabletop exercises could be conducted. These exercises could distinguish what works and where improvements are required to provide the best protection for students, faculty, staff, and the local community. Two examples are outlined here with the Berklee College of Music and the University of Maine in Orono.

Berklee College of Music, in downtown Boston, recognized these needs and formed a Crisis Management Team involving the highest officials at the College. Concurrently, they revised a list of hazards that may affect the College. To assess how their planning activities were progressing and how effective they would be, the Committee went forward to organize and conduct several tabletop exercises.

The University of Maine, in the Central part of the State, has been conducting tabletop exercises to test its internal emergency management systems for many years. The table top exercises included limited participation from outside agencies. After September 11, there was a recognized need to begin testing the communities' ability to respond to a major emergency response event including a terrorist attack. In cooperation with the Orono Fire Department (HAZMAT), Penobscot Emergency Management, Maine Emergency Management Agency, University of Maine System, Department of Homeland Security Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP), and numerous other groups, a multi-county/multi-agency tabletop exercise was conducted at the University of Maine.

Berklee
college of
music

THE UNIVERSITY OF
MAINE

Campus Profiles

Berklee College of Music

Boston, MA
UG Students: 3,400
Faculty: 470
No. of Buildings: 22
GSF: 650K
Operating Budget: \$90 million
Concert Halls: 1200 seat performance center and four recital halls.
No. of Performances: 2200 per year

University of Maine

Orono, ME
UG Students: 8,972
Grad Students: 2,250
Resident Students: 3300
Faculty and Staff: 726/2112
No. of Buildings: 200 +
Acres: 600
Operating Budget: \$259,000 million
Orono Town Population: 10,000 people
Hockey Game Draw: 5,000+ people

Project Goals

...at Berklee

- Identify shortfalls in the campus emergency management system.
- Improve response preparation with respect to an emergency event affecting the campus community.
- Organize a Crisis Management Team that contributes to the campus community.
- Develop a "per event" response protocol.
- Increase awareness of emergency management matters within the campus community.

U.S. EPA New England Best Management Practices Catalog for Colleges and Universities.

For more information about the catalog and other case studies visit

<http://www.epa.gov/region1/assistance/univ/bmpcatalog.html>

The provision of the case studies contained within the catalog does not constitute any form of endorsement or approval by the US EPA of particular institutions or technologies. The US EPA does not exercise editorial control over the information contained in non-EPA web sites, nor is the US EPA associated with or responsible for the content of these sites. The links to these web sites are provided for the convenience of the viewer.

Created by Campus Consortium for Environmental Excellence through EPA funding

...at UMaine

- Organize and implement a multi-county/multi-agency table top exercise to respond to a terrorist attack at the University of Maine.
- Exercise procedures for command, control, and coordination of emergency response activities.
- Exercise and improve initial communication plans to alert appropriate response agencies and UMaine personnel.
- Exercise and improve protocols for decontamination/medical treatment.
- Identify shortfalls in the emergency management system and provide recommendations for improvement.

Description of Issue/Problem

...at Berklee

- Lack of formalized plans for senior level response.
- Absence of an emergency management function.
- Security Programs existed, but were limited to personal security and physical facilities.

Tabletop Exercises May Include:
Chemical spills, fires in residential halls, critiques of actual emergencies, loss of power, terrorist incidents, and earthquakes.

...at UMaine

- Emergency response resources and measures for large events sponsored by the University did not contemplate a large scale incident/evacuation.
- A realization that a weapons of mass destruction incident at UMaine could impact the surrounding communities, and that a joint plan needed to be crafted and exercised.
- A recognized need to strengthen coordination of planning efforts and resources for any major emergency response in the area.

Pre-Project Considerations

- Involve as many departments and functions on campus as possible.
- Plan a major table top exercise with active cooperation from the county Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), fire departments, police, Emergency Medical Systems (EMS), community resource leaders, state and federal resources.
- Schedule a Tabletop Planning Committee meeting on a regular basis to develop a written scenario for the exercise. The scenario should include concerns from all participants.
- Design the tabletop exercise to be as real as possible.
- Develop evaluation tools to support the development of recommendations for improvement.
- Assign an exercise facilitator and support staff to keep the exercise running smoothly.
- Prepare to take the necessary steps for improvement after the exercise.
- Take a training course on tabletop exercise design offered by both state and federal agencies.



The provision of the case studies contained within the catalog does not constitute any form of endorsement or approval by the US EPA of particular institutions or technologies. The US EPA does not exercise editorial control over the information contained in non-EPA web sites, nor is the US EPA associated with or responsible for the content of these sites. The links to these web sites are provided for the convenience of the viewer.

Steps Taken

...at Berklee

1. Obtained support from the President.
2. Formed a Crisis Management Team (CMT) appointed by the President.
3. Held brainstorming sessions, and formed sub-committees to include communications, technology, disease, and fire/life safety.
4. Coordinated with Security who already had well established programs.
5. Conducted benchmarking studies to observe what other C/U's were doing in the local area, nationwide, and in London, England.
6. Established a "pre-event" protocol.
7. Developed tabletop exercises based on established protocols.
8. Sent a memo to all members of the CMT that an exercise was taking place and that attendance was required.
9. Conducted the exercise and tested the system. Promoted a "Plan, Do, Check, Act" approach when going through the tabletop exercise – tested the system to identify weaknesses in the written plans and involved all team participants.
10. Recorded their actions, communications and insights. The notes summarized the scenario, brought up open issues and what needed to be resolved, overall next steps, and recommendations for each of the issues identified.

...at UMaine

1. Developed a Multi-County Tabletop Planning Committee which would carry out many of the bulleted tasks listed below.
2. Conducted an assessment/hazard analysis of the community.
3. Provided the facility to host the table-top exercise and endorsed the effort.
4. Worked with the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and a consultant to develop a large multi-county/multi-agency tabletop exercise. Resources to conduct the exercise were provided by the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP).
5. Developed a mock scenario that included a terrorist attack.
6. Distributed invitations to key emergency response personnel at the local, state, and federal level.

Note: A consulting firm, with input from the Planning Committee, developed the manuals, organized the exercise, took notes during the exercise, and compiled an 'After Action Report'. These services were provided under the ODP contract.

The Exercise...

...at Berklee

Four tabletop exercises have been completed so far: a hostage situation, a power outage, a dorm fire, and a freight yard incident in the City of Boston.

The exercise was set up and members of the CMT were asked to attend. Details of the exercise were not provided before hand. Each team member played their assigned role at the College.

Real time was used as if the incident was truly unfolding. The security company mediated the exercise, but did not guide members of the Team through the exercise.



The provision of the case studies contained within the catalog does not constitute any form of endorsement or approval by the US EPA of particular institutions or technologies. The US EPA does not exercise editorial control over the information contained in non-EPA web sites, nor is the US EPA associated with or responsible for the content of these sites. The links to these web sites are provided for the convenience of the viewer.

...at UMaine

An all day tabletop exercise was conducted at the University Maine's campus. Each member of the tabletop exercise received a manual outlining the detailed scenario and thought provoking questions.

Approximately 70 local, state, and federal leaders and emergency response personnel participated in the tabletop exercise. The exercise scenario included a typical busy day at the University of Maine.

Participants were presented with the following mock scenario:

Students at the Alfond Arena start to exhibit symptoms of an exposure which include dizziness, nausea, and excessive sweating. The area turns into mass confusion and victims are falling unconscious.

A mock 911 call was made and participants began to respond and activate their existing systems.

An Incident Command Post was established; however, the initial emergency responders were quickly overwhelmed. Later in the exercise a second terrorist device located at another site was found.

The exercise was presented in distinct phases/modules to help maintain a realistic atmosphere.

A debriefing was conducted after each module to allow participants and organizations an opportunity to discuss response activities and review coordination issues for the future. The modules and feedback from the organizations involved were recorded by facilitators at each designated table.

Participants

...at Berklee

- Associate Vice President of Administration
- Security Management Consultant
- Crisis Management Team
 - VP Institutional Advancement
 - VP Administration/Finance
 - AVP Administration
 - VP Academic Affairs
 - VP Student Affairs
 - VP and AVP Information Technology
 - VP Berklee Media
 - VP External Affairs
 - AVP Public Information
 - AVP Special Programs
 - AVP Human Resources
 - AVP Community/Governmental Affairs
 - Dean of Professional Education
 - Director of Safety and Security
 - Director of Auxiliary Services
 - Director of Physical Plant
 - Director of Housing
 - Director of Network and Telecommunications
 - Director of Counseling
- Security Committee
- Boston Emergency Management Agency (BEMA) – attended one of the exercises



The provision of the case studies contained within the catalog does not constitute any form of endorsement or approval by the US EPA of particular institutions or technologies. The US EPA does not exercise editorial control over the information contained in non-EPA web sites, nor is the US EPA associated with or responsible for the content of these sites. The links to these web sites are provided for the convenience of the viewer.

...at UMaine

- University of Maine's - Emergency Response Planning Committee
- Orono Fire Department/HazMat Team
- Orono Police Department
- Penobscot County Emergency Management Agency
- Piscataquis County Emergency Management Agency
- Old Town Fire Department
- Old Town Police Department
- Bangor Fire Department
- Penobscot County Sheriffs Office
- Veazie Fire Department
- Eastern Maine Medical Center
- St Josephs Hospital
- Hancock County Emergency Management Agency
- Maine Emergency Management Agency
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- National Guard Civil Support Team
- North East Emergency Medical Services
- Red Cross, Pine Tree Branch

Costs at Berklee to Coordinate Tabletop Exercises

- Time to develop, set up meetings and attend meetings.
 - 2-3 hours prep time
 - 4 hours exercise
 - 1-2 hours post time to document exercise
- Refreshments
- Purchased 10K of emergency response equipment after determining needs.

Performance and Benefits

...at Berklee

- Increased awareness.
- A prepared and knowledgeable crisis management team.
- Continued involvement with the Boston Consortium, who sponsors emergency management conferences and provides a forum for the exchange of information. The consortium enables members to build a well-defined emergency network and serves to act as liaison to the Boston Emergency Management Agency.
- Berklee will become a "test-site" for the proposed city-wide identification system.
- Safety and security are taken more seriously at all levels of the College.
- An improved Plan for responses to emergency situations on campus.

Costs at UMaine to host the Table Top Exercises:

- Time for UMaine to staff attend Table Top Drill Planning Committee meetings.
 - 20 hours prep time
 - 8 hours exercise (13 UMaine staff)
- Refreshments - \$700
- **Note: Funding for the exercise development process was provided by the Maine Emergency Management Association (Grant from Homeland Security to State to Contractors to develop program for U Maine).**

...at UMaine

- The Tabletop exercise was successful and well attended. The exercise evaluation feedback forms indicated that the participants rated the exercise as good to excellent.
- Participants had the opportunity to practice and hone emergency response problem solving and communication skills.
- The increased participation from off-campus organizations provided new perspectives for emergency responders by interacting on a multi-jurisdictional basis.
- Heightened awareness in the community of the need for increased security measures.
- This tabletop will serve as the basis for further exercises including mock victims.

The provision of the case studies contained within the catalog does not constitute any form of endorsement or approval by the US EPA of particular institutions or technologies. The US EPA does not exercise editorial control over the information contained in non-EPA web sites, nor is the US EPA associated with or responsible for the content of these sites. The links to these web sites are provided for the convenience of the viewer.

Lessons Learned

...at Berklee

- Need to develop a program on how to account for students living in apartment's off-campus.
- Identify key personnel and obtain special access ID's for them.
- Contact other campuses and share resources.
- Develop both formal and informal networks for sharing - you no longer have to do everything yourself. (This sharing has brought an awareness of the interdependence of the college community).
- Need to develop back-up systems and redundancy.
- Diagnose the strengths and weaknesses in your response system with tabletop exercises.
- Involve the local response agencies.

...at UMaine

- Continue to develop and exercise SOPs that are consistent with the involved organizations.
- Coordinate Police and Fire Department's SOPs to preserve crime scenes and forensic evidence.
- Support training for enforcement officers in state, county and local government to receive WMD Awareness in addition to Hazmat Awareness/First Responder training.
- Understand that local hospitals have limited decontamination equipment.
- Provide prompt and accurate information to local hospitals and first responders to minimize delays.
- Control of people during public events (for the purpose of accountability) is extremely difficult due to numerous egress points and diversity of visitors at major events.
- Develop additional methods to keep the Presidents Office and the entire University community updated on activities and new programs.
- Provide appropriate training on a periodic basis to first responders on campus in coordination with emergency response programs.



Next Steps

...at Berklee

- Test Critical Management Team by conducting an on-site incident.
- Continue to review communication systems.
- Expand upon and develop a more comprehensive risk assessment.
- Create and clarify specific role assignments.
- Develop a medical scenario as an exercise.

...at UMaine

- Review tabletop exercise summary report with Planning Committee and University of Maine senior management staff.
- Begin planning a "functional exercise" to simulate real time scenarios with some equipment being dispatched into the field.
- Revise Emergency Response Plans to provide additional resources/systems for accountability.
- Improve coordination of local, county, and state emergency response resources.
- Explore the use of student volunteer groups in future exercises.
- Purchase portable decontamination equipment.

The provision of the case studies contained within the catalog does not constitute any form of endorsement or approval by the US EPA of particular institutions or technologies. The US EPA does not exercise editorial control over the information contained in non-EPA web sites, nor is the US EPA associated with or responsible for the content of these sites. The links to these web sites are provided for the convenience of the viewer.

For Further Information

...at Berklee

John Eldert, Associate Vice President for Administration

jeldert@berklee.edu

...at UMaine

Tom Spitz, Facility Emergency Coordinator & Chemical Hygiene Officer

spitz@maine.edu

Note: This document outlines leading edge practices of two very different institutions; Berklee College with a student population of almost 4,000 and the University of Maine with almost 12,000. Berklee is situated in an urban setting while U of Maine is in a rural setting. After 9/11, Berklee conducted the exercises internally while U of Maine worked with many agencies within the State of Maine and received funding. Both institutions have gained from their experiences and the lessons learned here can be applied to most institutions in the United States.

The provision of the case studies contained within the catalog does not constitute any form of endorsement or approval by the US EPA of particular institutions or technologies. The US EPA does not exercise editorial control over the information contained in non-EPA web sites, nor is the US EPA associated with or responsible for the content of these sites. The links to these web sites are provided for the convenience of the viewer.

Created by Campus Consortium for Environmental Excellence through EPA funding