

Overview

All emergency message originators must be as proficient as possible in issuing and transmitting these critical potentially life-saving EAS and WEA messages. Tabletop exercises are a key tool to help initiate and maintain proficiency, particularly given ongoing personnel turnover.

Tabletop exercises not only involve emergency message originators, but also all partners and stakeholders involved in the various emergency event codes, including 911 dispatchers, law enforcement, emergency management, fire agencies, health departments, transportation departments, public works, and broadcasters.

Tabletop exercises with local partners and stakeholders help all involved in working through various scenarios. Each exercise participate hears and learns more about how each organization responds to each scenario. The tabletop exercise also helps fine-tune emergency message wording to be concise and focused to fit within the 2-minute time limit of EAS messages and 360 character limit of WEA messages (includes any embedded links).

These exercises can also help with follow up social media information wording, press briefing talking point, and more.

These tabletop exercises should be conducted periodically, like monthly or quarterly. They can be a separate event, combined with a regular planned meeting such as a Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC) meeting, or be a part of other exercise events.

The tabletop exercise scenarios attached here are generic scenarios permitting local jurisdictions to tailor them to best fit their needs and geographic area. For instance, oil trains only roll through selected parts of Washington State.

Tabletop Exercise Scenario Examples

Oil Train Derailment

An oil train carrying over 100 cars of Bakken oil derails in your community with 20 cars off the tracks and some rolled on their sides. A fire starts in one car and spreads to other neighboring cars, sending a toxic plume into the air. The wind is from xx direction at about 5 mph.

- 1 – What information should you release to the public at this point?
- 2 – What event code would you use?
- 3 – Would you use EAS? WEA? NWEM? All?
- 4 – Would you geo-target this messaging, and if so, how would you determine where to draw the geo-targeting?
- 5 – Once the event is under control and no longer a threat, how would you notify the public of the all-clear?

Train Involving Cars with Hazardous Materials

A train including a dozen cars carrying unknown hazardous materials rolling through your community derails. Several of the derailed cars happen to be carrying those hazardous materials and are leaking onto the ground. One car catches fire sending a plume into the air.

- 1 – How do you determine what the hazardous materials are involved?
- 2 – You need to inform the public of plume of toxic material. What EAS and WEA event code(s) would you use?
- 3 – Would you use EAS? WEA? NWEM? Or all three?
- 4 – Would you geo-target this messaging, and if so, how would you determine where to draw the geo-targeting?
- 5 – Once the event is under control, hazmat materials were found to have significantly leaked into the ground, running off into drainage systems and potentially into the ground water. What response steps and emergency messaging would you take?

Active Shooter

Word arrives that an active shooter is at a school/grocery store/mall/theater/outdoor event venue and immediate public alert and warning is needed to take appropriate actions until further notice.

- 1 – What information should you release to the public initially?
- 2 – What event code would you use?
- 3 – Would you use EAS? WEA? NWEM? All?
- 4 – Would you geo-target this messaging, and if so, how would you determine where to draw the geo-targeting?
- 5 – Once more information about the shooter's status becomes known, what additional public alert and warning messages are needed and how to disseminate them?
- 6 – Once the event is under control and no longer a threat, how would you notify the public of the all-clear?

Wildfire

A wind-driven wildfire is moving at a rapid pace and threatens neighborhoods, businesses and public structures.

- 1 – What information should you release to the public initially?
- 2 – What event code would you use?
- 3 – Would you use EAS? WEA? NWEM? All?
- 4 – Would you geo-target this messaging, and if so, how would you determine where to draw the geo-targeting?
- 5 – How would you provide additional subsequent warning information as the fire continues to spread? Would you use EAS again? WEA? NWEM? All?

Jail Break

A prisoner escapes from a jail or prison, and is loose in the community.

- 1 – What information should you release to the public initially?
- 2 – What event code would you use?
- 3 – Would you use EAS? WEA? NWEM? All?
- 4 – Would you geo-target this messaging, and if so, how would you determine where to draw the geo-targeting?
- 5 – How would you provide additional subsequent warning information until the escapee is captured? Would you use EAS again? WEA? NWEM? All?

Tainted Water

A community's water supply has been discovered to be tainted by a biological or chemical agent.

- 1 – What information should you release to the public initially?
- 2 – What event code would you use?
- 3 – Would you use EAS? WEA? NWEM? All?
- 4 – Would you geo-target this messaging, and if so, how would you determine where to draw the geo-targeting?
- 5 – How would you provide additional subsequent information until the water supply becomes safe again? Would you use EAS again? WEA? NWEM? All? Something else?