



**GUIDE TO DEVELOPING AND
CONDUCTING BUSINESS CONTINUITY
EXERCISES**

**ATLANTA, GEORGIA
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FOREWORD

Lawyers and judges have an ethical responsibility for the safety of their employees and an obligation to their clients and the people of their communities to continue to operate in a prudent and efficient manner, even in the circumstance of an impending or ongoing threat. In a policy statement dated January 2011, the ABA's Executive Director called for institutionalization of a comprehensive approach to business continuity across the ABA, following federal guidance.

In 2010, the Special Committee on Disaster Response and Preparedness began an initiative to guide ABA member, law firms and bar associations in the development of plans that ensure the ability to continue their essential functions under circumstances causing major disruptions to operations.

Consistent with standards and the Executive Director's January 2011 policy, the ABA has a business continuity management (BCM) plan as well as a system for conducting tests, training, and exercises on a recurring basis. The ABA encourages members, law firms and bar associations to develop BCM systems. In support of this policy, this Guide provides suggestions and examples to assist members in planning and conducting business continuity exercises. Members are invited to tailor the procedures, examples, and templates to their organization's specific needs.

Recommendations for changes to this document should be addressed in writing to:

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This Guide provides information and recommended procedures for the design and conduct of business continuity exercises.

1.2 Organization

Figure 1 shows the high level steps in planning and conducting an exercise. The approach shown breaks the tasks of developing the exercise plan, developing exercise materials and conducting the exercise into manageable pieces.

- Tips
- ❑ Use an incremental approach by providing orientation sessions and tabletop exercises prior to full-scale or functional exercises
 - ❑ Commit and plan regular, increasingly sophisticated training sessions
 - ❑ Simplify subject matter and material as much as possible

The Director or Managing Partner plays the central role, and usually has overall responsibility for the exercise.

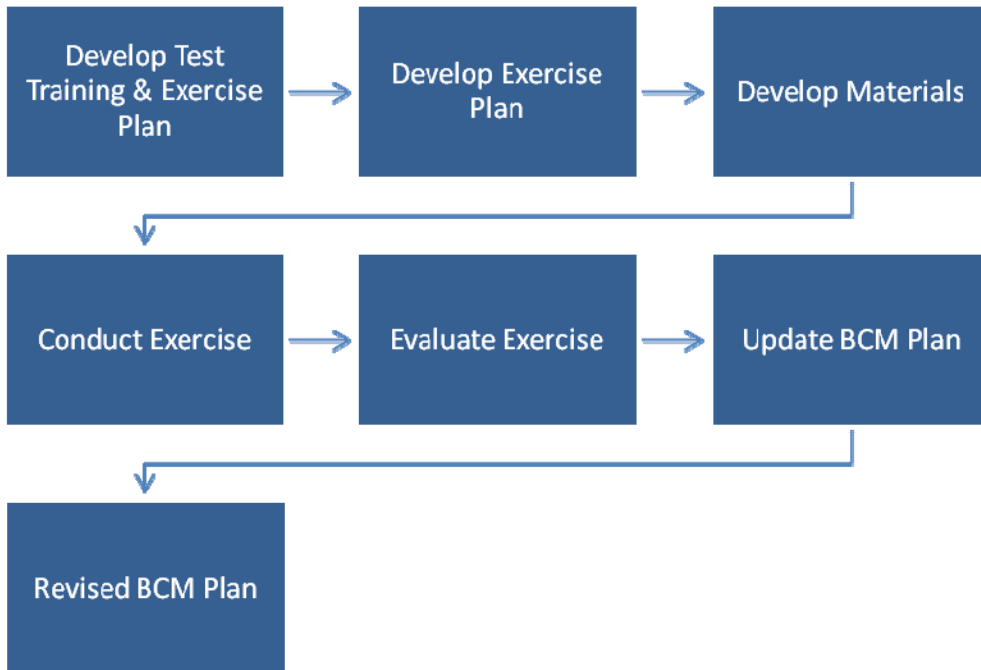


Figure 1: Exercise Flowchart

2.0 Rehearsal, Test, Training, and Exercise System

An essential element of a successful BCM system is a supporting process of rehearsals, tests, training events and exercises.

2.1 General

Lawyers, law firms and law associations should have a process that describes how the organization intends to:

- Test information systems and equipment.
- Train individuals and teams on their roles and responsibilities.
- Exercise BCM plans and procedures.

2.2 Testing

Examples include evaluations of:

- Alert and notification procedures and systems, including instructions for relocation to pre-designated facilities, with and without warning and during duty and non-duty hours.
- Logistical support, services, and infrastructure systems (e.g. water, electrical power, heating, and air conditioning) at the alternate site.
- Interoperable communications and information systems.
- A law firm's or association's ability at all emergency facilities to access vital records, systems, and databases necessary to perform essential functions.

All required BCM plan updates, identified through the testing process, are incorporated into the next revision of the BCM plan.

2.3 Training

Examples of possible training events include:

- Individual and team training of all designated personnel to ensure currency of knowledge and integration of skills necessary to implement BCM plans and carry out essential functions.
- Briefing on the current threat assessment.
- Validation of transportation and notification plans.
- Tutorials and refresher instruction on major operational elements of the BCM plan.

2.4 Exercises

Exercises simulate actual emergency situations.

They are used to:

- Evaluate the state of an organization's preparedness.
- Allow leaders, staff, and other agencies to practice operational procedures.
- Improve the response capability of individuals and organizations.

Tip

Experience has shown that well planned and interesting exercises yield a high level of preparedness with personnel who are able to cope with the stressful environment of an actual emergency.

- Validate plans, policies, procedures, and systems.
- Determine the effectiveness of the communications and information systems intended to support the organization during an emergency, and
- Identify shortfalls in current emergency planning or capabilities.

An exercise of the organization must consider participation by all types of responding agencies and organizations in the area, including police, fire, public works, medical, and transportation resources.

2.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Typical roles and responsibilities for exercise planning are shown in Figure 2.

Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Test and Exercise Program Coordinator (may be the COOP Program Coordinator)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate TT&E activities • Identify resource requirements • Develop BCM Exercise Plan
Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance and approval for proposed Exercise Plan • As required, participate in exercises
IT Systems Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate IT recovery plans • Plan and conduct IT contingency tests, training, and exercises • Support Test and Exercise Program Coordinator in developing and conducting a BCM exercise
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the exercise, serve as members of the BCM emergency teams, such as Advance Team, Site Preparation Team, Relocation Team, etc. • Be familiar with the BCM plan • Know individual and team assignments and responsibilities • As appropriate, have authority to commit resources • Be available for BCM activation

Figure 2: Typical Planning Roles and Responsibilities

3.0 Exercise Type and Format

The format of the exercise must be designed to be consistent with the current organization and its BCM teams. It is also important to use an incremental approach: Select an exercise format that is compatible with the audience’s level of understanding of the subject matter. It is practical, for example, to provide an orientation session and tabletop exercise prior to conducting a full-scale exercise.

- Tips for Selecting the Exercise Type*

 - Who will be trained?*
 - What are the training objectives?*
 - Which exercise format is best suited to accomplish each objective?*
 - What resources are available (time, facilities, systems, equipment)?*

Common exercise types are shown in Figure 3.

Exercise Type	Description
Orientation	A seminar and/or briefing activity used to familiarize participants with BCM responsibilities
Test or Functional Drill	Coordinated, supervised activity normally used to test, develop, or maintain skills in a single operation or function in a single office or organization
Tabletop Exercise	Simulates emergency situation in an informal, stress-free environment; designed to elicit constructive scenario-based discussions for an examination of the existing BCM plan and individual state of training and preparedness
Functional Exercise	Used to validate the capability of an organization to respond to a simulated emergency, in order to test one or more functions of the plan
Full Scale Exercise	Simulates an actual emergency; intended to evaluate operational BCM procedures and capabilities under simulated stressful conditions

Figure 3: Exercise Types

3.1 Orientation

An orientation is a seminar type exercise that is conducted in an informal setting. A facilitator may use either a panel discussion or slide briefing to present the key points. Typically, an orientation lasts no more than one to two hours.

Figure 4 shows the key characteristics of the orientation type of exercise.

Orientation	
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low stress • Usually presented as an informal discussion in a group setting • Little or no simulation • Formats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Lecture/briefing o Panel discussion o Slide or video presentation o Guest lecturer
Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Introduce newly assigned principals or staff to the court emergency plans, contents of the BCM plan, and their roles and responsibilities • Annual refresher: Review BCM plan and roles and responsibilities (all BCM-related personnel) • Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Introduce an exercise or series of exercises o Motivate personnel for participation in subsequent exercises o Discuss a problem or issue in a group setting
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led by a facilitator, who presents information and guides discussion • Facilitator should have some leadership skills and knowledge of subject and objectives of the orientation
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be aimed at several people from a single team or office; or • May be cross-functional-involving one or two participants for each function, service, or BCM team being discussed
Facilities	Conference room or other fixed facility, with appropriate audio-visual support to support the chosen format
Time	One to two hours
Preparation	Simple to prepare and conduct: two weeks preparation time is usually sufficient

Figure 4: Orientation Characteristics

3.2 Tests and Functional Drills

Tests and functional drills may be used to examine specific skills required for BCM readiness.

Tip - Tests and Functional Drills

The advantage of tests and drills is their focus on a relatively limited portion of the total COOP plan, with no requirement to coordinate with other offices or agencies or to test multiple functions.

Figure 5 shows the key characteristics of the test or functional drill.

Test or Functional Drill	
Format	<p>Actual performance of a specified activity or response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually presented as an informal discussion in a group setting • Little or no simulation • Formats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Lecture/briefing o Panel discussion o Slide or video presentation o Guest lecturer
Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test a specific operation • Examine specific skill or skills required for BCM readiness or response • Provide training in new equipment, to develop new policies and procedures, or to practice and maintain current skills • Examples of BCM-related skills or procedures that could be the subject of a test or functional drill: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o BCM activation/notification: Procedures to reach all personnel who must be notified (also used to verify contact information) o Building evacuation o Moving to an alternate location o Intake Department's performance of case processing following BCM activation
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be led and evaluated by a manager, supervisor, office head, or other leader responsible for the operation or skill(s) to be tested • Participants must have a good knowledge of the operation or skill(s) to be tested
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on the operation or skill(s) to be tested • For example, may include personnel responsible for coordination, operations and/or response
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on the operation or skill(s) to be tested • When possible, should be conducted in the actual facility, such as an office or at the alternate site or other operating center
Time	Thirty minutes to two hours
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the easiest exercise types to design • Time to prepare: from a few days to a month • Participants usually need a short orientation

Figure 5: Key Characteristics of a Test or Drill

3.3 Tabletop Exercise

Tabletop exercises usually involve senior staff, key staff with emergency management responsibilities, other staff members with responsibilities, and selected outside officials gathered in an informal setting to discuss simulated emergency conditions.

The tabletop is intended to stimulate discussion of various issues concerning a hypothetical situation and the policies, plans, and procedures that guide response and recovery processes.

Tips – Rules for a Tabletop Exercise

- ❑ *Everyone is free to contribute*
- ❑ *The scenario can/will change as needed*
- ❑ *A no-fault exercise, not a “test”*
- ❑ *Facilitator has the right to table any issue for later discussion or resolution*
- ❑ *No outside interruptions permitted*

The exercise typically features an opening session, one or more plenary sessions, and a post-exercise review session. Participants consider questions such as coordination, notification, information collection and dissemination, assignment of responsibilities, usually focusing on how participants would react to a specific BCM-related situation and looking for shortfalls in the existing BCM plan that may require revisions to the plan.

As shown in Figure 6, for the discussion portion of the exercise the participants may be divided into smaller “breakout” groups (goal: not more than 10-15 per group). Each group may be assigned to a different table in a large room or each breakout group may be given a separate room.

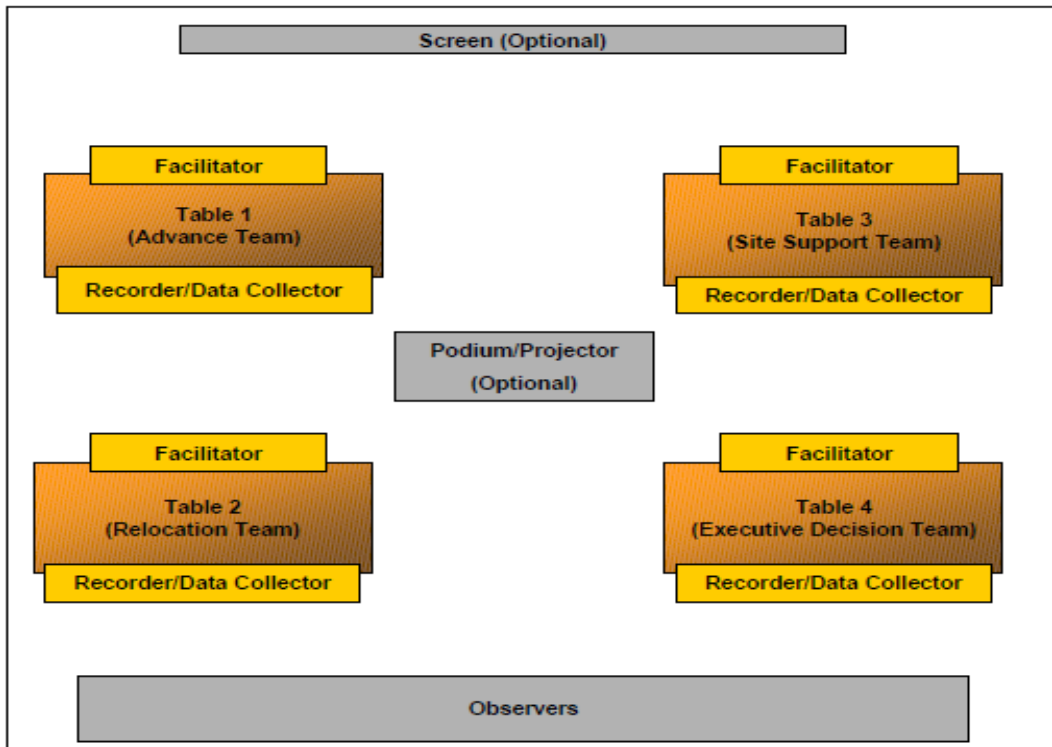


Figure 6: Tabletop Exercise

The most important element of the tabletop exercise is the facilitator, who sets the tone and keeps the discussion focused.

Tip

□ *The tabletop exercise involves a modest commitment in terms of time, cost, and resources, and thus is the easiest to plan and conduct.*

The tabletop exercise is conducted in a “no fault” non-threatening environment. It is an appropriate format to use for familiarizing newly assigned or appointed personnel and senior officials with established or emerging BCM concepts, plans, policies, procedures, systems, and facilities. The emphasis is on problem solving rather than rapid and spontaneous decision making.

Figure 7 shows the key characteristics of the tabletop exercise.

Tabletop Exercise	
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise usually begins with an overview briefing followed by the introduction to a situation or scenario that sets the stage for discussion • Participants then remain in the same room or move to breakdown discussion groups • To be effective, not more than 10 to 15 persons in each discussion group • Facilitator in each group may stimulate discussion by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Referring to discussion questions in a Participant Workbook o Injecting additional scenarios or problem statements that require participants to discuss actions they would take in response • Participants discuss topics involving coordination, notification, information collection and dissemination, individual and team roles and responsibilities, etc. • Maps, charts, or information packets may be used to increase realism • Following discussions, the facilitator leads a post-exercise review and summary
Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low stress, no-fault discussion of policy and procedures • Look for shortfalls in existing policy, plans, procedures, or capabilities • Good opportunity for key agencies and stakeholders to become acquainted with each other, their interrelated roles, and their respective responsibilities • Prepare for a subsequent functional or full scale exercise
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitator is key to the success of the exercise: sets the tone and keeps discussions focused • Facilitator must be familiar with the background material, scenarios, and topics to be discussed
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on the exercise objectives • May involve many individuals and organizations – anyone who may learn from or contribute to the planned discussion topics
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large conference room or briefing facility with a large table or individual desks or writing chairs for participants

Tabletop Exercise	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If separate breakout discussion groups are envisioned, the conference room must be large enough to accommodate them without interference with each other, or additional separate breakout rooms must be available
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually, not more than four hours but may be longer if desired • Discussion times are often open-ended, and participants are encouraged to take their time in arriving at in-depth decisions, without time pressure • When time is up, the activity is concluded • Participants do not need to complete every item for the exercise to be a success
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically, 4 to 6 weeks to prepare • Typical materials: Read Ahead Guide, Participant Workbook

Figure 7: Key Characteristics of a Tabletop Exercise

3.4 Functional Exercise

A functional exercise simulates an emergency or disaster in the most realistic manner possible, short of actually moving people and equipment to an actual relocation facility. It achieves realism through a carefully designed and scripted scenario in which actual operations and field activities are simulated.

The functional exercise is used to test or evaluate individual capabilities, multiple functions, or activities within a function or group of functions. Exercise activities are usually under a time constraint and an evaluation or critique is usually held at the end of the exercise.

During exercise play, simulators in the control or response cell submit messages into play, controllers monitor the play, and observers record the actions players take in response to simulated situations injected by the controllers. Evaluators determine effectiveness, using the exercise objectives as criteria.

Tips - Functional Exercise

- ❑ *Difference from a tabletop exercise: participants simulate actual operations and field activities*
- ❑ *Advantage over tabletop: increased realism*
- ❑ *Like the tabletop exercise, the functional exercise involves a relatively modest commitment in terms of time, cost, and resources,*

Figure 8 shows the key characteristics of the functional exercise.

Functional Exercise	
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive exercise, similar to a full scale exercise without the actual equipment • Achieves realism by simulating actual operations or field activities • Simulates a BCM incident in the most realistic manner possible short of actually moving people and equipment to an actual relocation facility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Players practice responding in a realistic way to carefully planned and sequenced messages given to them by “simulators” • Stressful because players respond in real time, with on-the-spot decisions and actions that then generate real responses and consequences from other players • Difficult to design: messages must be carefully scripted and sequenced
Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test or evaluate individual capabilities, multiple functions, or activities within a function or group of functions without incurring the expense of a full scale exercise • Prepare for a subsequent full scale exercise
Leadership and Participants	<p>Exercise organization is complex, with many roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controllers: Manage and direct the flow of the exercise • Simulators: Assume external roles and deliver planned messages (implementers) to players • Evaluators: Observers who assess performance and exercise effectiveness • Facilitator/Exercise Director: Overall responsibility for keeping the exercise on track • Data Collectors: Record exercise events and observations for later analysis • Players: Participants who respond as they would in an actual emergency
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually conducted in actual or simulated operations center, relocation facility, etc.; ideally, the same area in which players would operate in a real emergency • Controllers and simulators usually located in a separate room • Realism enhanced by use of telephones, radios, televisions, maps, etc.

Functional Exercise	
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually three to eight hours, but may be longer if desired
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six to eighteen months to prepare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Players need to build extensive experience with functions to be tested ○ Should precede exercise by training and lower level exercises ○ Controllers, evaluators, data collectors, and simulators require training

Figure 8: Key Characteristics of a Functional Exercise

3.5 Full Scale Exercise

The most complex and comprehensive format is the full-scale exercise. As much as possible, it places participants in circumstances resembling those of an actual emergency or disaster. This type of exercise is designed around a realistic scenario, and typically involves actually moving to an alternate location and continuing the execution of mission-essential functions using capabilities, resources, and backup systems available at the alternate facility.

Events in the initial scenario result in a player decision to move to an actual alternate facility to continue the execution of the organization’s essential functions using actual capabilities and systems. Members of the control or response cell simulate outside agencies and organizations, injecting additional scenario-based events at appropriate times to test player reactions. As with the functional exercise, during exercise play controllers monitor the play, observers record player actions, and evaluators determine effectiveness using the exercise objectives as criteria.

Tips - Full Scale Exercise

- ❑ *Difference from functional exercise: Actual mobilization and movement of personnel and resources are required*
- ❑ *Players demonstrate coordination, response, alternate facility operations, and recovery using actual capabilities*
- ❑ *Usually used to evaluate the operational capabilities of the organization's entire emergency management system and all elements of the BCM plan*

The full scale exercise places extra demands on the abilities and experience of the exercise planners who must ensure extreme realism.

Figure 9 shows the key characteristics of the full scale exercise.

Full Scale Exercise	
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ultimate exercise type: the most complex and comprehensive exercise format • As much as possible, places participants in circumstances resembling those of an actual emergency or disaster • Exercise begins with a description of the event, communicated to responders in the same manner as in the real event; personnel conduct actual BCM activation, notification, relocation, and operations at alternate facility • Stressful because players respond in real time, with on-the-spot decisions and actions that then generate real responses and consequences from other players • Difficult to design: messages must be carefully scripted and sequenced
Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically used to evaluate the operational capabilities of the court's entire emergency management program and all elements of the BCM plan
Leadership and Participants	<p>Exercise organization is complex, with many roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controllers: Manage and direct the flow of the exercise • Simulators: Assume external roles and deliver planned messages (implementers) to players • Evaluators: Observers who assess performance and exercise effectiveness • Facilitator/Exercise Director: Overall responsibility for keeping the exercise on track • Data Collectors: Record exercise events and observations for later analysis

Full Scale Exercise	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players: Demonstrate coordination, response, alternate facility operations, and recovery using actual capabilities
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event unfolds in a realistic scenario or situation • Involves movement to actual relocation facility • Controllers and simulators usually located in a separate area • Realism enhanced by use of actual information systems, databases, telephones, radios, televisions, maps, etc.
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be as short as two to four hours, but usually lasts one or more days
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One year to eighteen months to prepare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Places extra demands on exercise planners, who must ensure extreme realism ○ Requires extensive investment in time, effort, and resources ○ Players need to build extensive experience with functions to be tested ○ Should precede exercise by numerous drills and preparatory tabletop and functional exercises ○ Controllers, evaluators, data collectors, and simulators require training

Figure 9: Key Characteristics of a Full Scale Exercise

3.6 Summary: Key Exercise Characteristics

Figure 10 summarizes the key similarities and differences among the five exercise types discussed.

	Orientation	Test or Functional Drill	Tabletop Exercise	Functional Exercise	Full Scale Exercise
Format	Informal discussion in group setting Various presentation methods	Actual field or facility Actual equipment or systems	Narrative situation or scenario Discussion questions based on situations Facilitated discussions No time pressure	Realistic simulation but no actual equipment or systems Interactive, complex Players respond to messages (events/problems) from simulators Conducted in real time; stressful	Players move to actual site, use actual capabilities Extreme realism Players respond to messages (events/problems) from simulators Stressful because players respond in real time Difficult to design
Leaders	Facilitator Recorders	Manager, supervisor, office head	Usually a facilitator	Facilitator or exercise director	Facilitator or exercise director

	Orientation	Test or Functional Drill	Tabletop Exercise	Functional Exercise	Full Scale Exercise
Participants	Single agency, department, office, or cross-functional	Personnel responsible for the skill or function being tested	Anyone who may learn from or contribute to the planned discussion topics	Controllers Simulators Evaluators Facilitator/Exercise Director Data Collectors Players	Controllers Simulators Evaluators Facilitator/Exercise Director Data Collectors Players
Facilities	Conference room	Actual facility, system, equipment	Large conference room Breakout rooms if desired	Simulated alternate facility or other operating area	Actual alternate facility, operations center, etc. Realistic setting
Time	1 to 2 hours	30 minutes to 2 hours	Usually not more than 4 hours, may be longer	3 to 8 hours, may be longer	May be 2 to 4 hours but usually lasts one or more days
Preparation	Simple 2 weeks	Easy, 1 month Participants need orientation	4 to 6 weeks Read Ahead Guide, Participant Workbook	Complex 6-18 months Preceded by simpler exercises	1 to 1½ years Need preparatory drills and functional exercises

Figure 10: Summary of Key Exercise Characteristics

3.7 Participants

Comprehensive knowledge of the BCM plan is essential for all players prior to participation in a rehearsal. The leadership should ensure that all managers and staff have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities for BCM operations.

- Tips*
- ❑ *Assign roles to willing participants*
 - ❑ *Demonstrate court leadership commitment to emergency preparedness through participation from all levels*
 - ❑ *Clearly articulate responsibilities without being rigid*

3.8 Scenario and Events

3.8.1 Scenario

The general scenario is a brief narrative that sets the stage for the exercise and gets the participants in the mood for a realistic experience.

The development of a general scenario should approximate the likely man-made or natural crises that would trigger activation of the plan. This general scenario should be developed in a manner that separates events into the phases of Activation and Relocation, Operations at the Alternate Site(s), and Recovery and Reconstitution.

In addition, the scenario should clearly indicate whether the decision to activate the BCM plan will be based on events with warning or events without warning, and whether it occurs during normal office hours or non-office hours. To supplement the general scenario for the exercise, the exercise development team may prepare updates to be injected during the exercise to cause additional responses from the participants.

3.8.2 Events

Once a general scenario has been developed, it is necessary to develop specific events that will cause the players to discuss (tabletop exercises) or take (functional or full scale exercises) a desired action. A given scenario event may portray an activity, action, or requirement.

Players in an exercise either respond to conditions portrayed in the scenario, to the actions of other players and participating agencies, or to stimuli provide by specific pre-scripted events. These stimuli are commonly referred to as “messages,” “scripts,” or “implementers.”

The pre-scripted event serves as a vehicle for providing information to prompt a player response in specific functional areas in support of exercise objectives. In turn, the player response is evaluated to determine proficiency and successful accomplishment of an exercise objective.

4.0 Exercise Materials

This section contains a brief discussion of several items that may be used to prepare exercise participants and enhance the effectiveness of the exercise experience.

4.1 Agenda

The exercise agenda should be developed to support the exercise concept and training format established by the exercise development team. The agenda should include specific time frames for each event along with the location for that event.

Tips: Suggested Topics in a General Scenario

- ❑ *What event?*
- ❑ *How did you find out?*
- ❑ *Was there advance warning?*
- ❑ *What time?*
- ❑ *Where is it occurring?*
- ❑ *How fast, strong, deep, dangerous?*
- ❑ *Is there damage and/or loss of life?*
- ❑ *What are the relevant weather conditions?*
- ❑ *Other factors?*

Tips

- ❑ *Keep the agenda focused and moving. Permit enough time for discussion, but not too much.*
- ❑ *Avoid the 'drudgery' factor – spend enough time on topics to permit minimal level of understanding and move on. Wrap-back later in the material to reinforce key concepts*

Figure 11 shows an example of an agenda for a tabletop exercise.

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	COMMENTS
8:00 – 8:15	Introduction	Conference Room	All participants and facilitators in attendance
8:15 – 8:45	BCM Review	Conference Room	All participants and facilitators in attendance
8:45 – 9:00	Tabletop overview Introduction to General Secenario	Conference Room	All participants and facilitators in attendance
9:00 – 10:00	Move #1 Activation and Relocation	Conference Room or Team Breakout Rooms	Facilitators and participants proceed to assigned tables or breakout rooms
10:00 – 11:00	Move #2 Alternate Site Operations	Conference Room or Team Breakout Rooms	
11:00 – 12:00	Move #3 Reconstitution	Conference Room or Team Breakout Rooms	
12:00 – 12:30	Post Exercise Review	Conference Room	Facilitators, court unit executives, and participants

Figure 11: Example of an Agenda for a Tabletop Exercise

4.2 Read Ahead Concept Plan

The Read Ahead Concept Plan provides participants with key information prior to the start of the exercise such as agenda, objectives, exercise, format, etc. It is recommended that it be distributed to all exercise participants a few days prior to the start of the exercise. Typically, this document contains a brief discussion of the following:

- BCM Overview
- Agenda
- Purpose and Objectives
- Participants
- Exercise Format
- Exercise Location and Date(s)
- Topics or references to be reviewed prior to the exercise

Tips

- ❑ *Tailor the Read Ahead Guide to topics that will be discussed during the exercise.*
- ❑ *Add specific references to relevant sections of the COOP plan and policy.*
- ❑ *Provide relevant sections of the COOP plan to participants in advance.*
- ❑ *Clearly mark exercise material 'Exercise, Exercise, Exercise'*
- ❑ *Use a realistic scenario; have fun with it!*

4.3 Participant Workbook

A Participant Workbook is particularly useful for tabletop exercises but may be used with any type of exercise. In addition, to containing relevant background information, the Workbook contains a series of scenario-based situations, with several discussion questions following each

situation. These questions are designed to stimulate the discussion of issues and actions but they should not be considered to restrict the discussion of other topics raised by exercise participants.

4.4 Evaluation Plan

Items to be evaluated are derived from the approved exercise objectives. If used, the Evaluation Plan should address, as a minimum:

- Exercise Objectives
- Items to be Evaluated
- Evaluation Structure
- Evaluation Techniques
- Measures of Effectiveness
- Data Collection Forms
- Administrative Instructions
- Post-Exercise Reporting Procedures and Formats

5.0 Exercise Personnel

5.1 Facilitators (All Exercise Types)

The use of senior level facilitators, who have a detailed understanding of the BCM plan, is key to the success of any exercise, but especially a tabletop exercise. The facilitator guides and maintains the focus and pace of the exercise discussion topics. The use of senior level facilitators frees the leaders of the responsibility, and allows them to maximize their own participation in the exercise. In advance of the exercise, the planner(s) and facilitator(s) should make contact with the respective leaders whom they will assist during the exercise, in order to coordinate the exercise plan and to gain an understanding of the organization and its members. In addition to good facilitation skills, the facilitator must also have a complete understanding of the missions, organization, BCM plan, and other relevant information. Following the exercise, the facilitator leads the analysis of exercise data and assists in the preparation of the after action report to capture key lessons learned.

Key facilitator actions include:

- Set the stage.
- Manage the exercise.
- Guide the discussions.

5.2 Observers (Functional and Full Scale Exercise)

Observers note player actions and later report on what went well or did not go well. They determine if goals and objectives are met and note how participants performed. The number of observers required depends on the overall size and scope of the exercise.

Tips

- *Provide space in the Workbook following each question to allow the participant to record thoughts and key points.*
- *Each participant should be allowed to keep the completed Workbook as a record of the exercise.*

Observer responsibilities include:

- Participate in critiques and development of the after action report.
- Brief the controller during the exercise when problems arise.
- Keep a log of all observations and events.

6.0 Exercise Review and Evaluation

6.1 Post Exercise Review

This review will assist identifying the most notable successes, failures, and lessons learned to make improvements to the BCM plan. Minutes are normally drafted and distributed to the exercise participants, and may be provided as an annex to the after action report.

Examples of questions for the exercise leadership team to address during the review session immediately after the completion of the exercise include the following:

- What went well in the exercise?
- What did not go well?
- What could have been done differently in this exercise to assist in improving preparation for an overall BCM operation?
- What improvements should be made to the BCM plan as a result of this exercise?
- What recommendations can be made to improve the BCM training and exercise program?

6.2 After Action Report (AAR)

The AAR should address strengths and weaknesses of the planning process as they affected the ability to develop and eventually conduct an effective exercise. Normally, the AAR does not focus on such things as the scenario used in the exercise. Rather, the AAR intent is to capture shortfalls in existing policies, procedures, capabilities or resources that affect the successful execution of the BCM plan.

In addition to addressing the effectiveness of existing policies, plans, and procedures, other suggested topics for inclusion in the AAR include:

- Design of the exercise; any problems noted and recommendations for future exercises.
- Exercise site(s): adequacy of the site and support for the exercise.
- Adequacy of communications and information systems.
- Access to required vital records and databases.
- The relocation process and recovery process and problems noted
- Adequacy of the administrative support for the exercise.
- Adequacy of the timeline available for the exercise development process, and where more time may be needed in the future.

6.3 BCM Plan Revision

With the completion of the exercise, the leadership team now has a basis for developing a more effective plan. The recommendations from the exercise, contained in the AAR, should be coordinated with executives and incorporated into the appropriate sections and annexes within the plan during the annual review and update of the plan.

Tips

- ❑ *The BCM plan is a living document – it should be reviewed and updated at least once per year*
- ❑ *Urgent changes arising from the exercise should be incorporated at once, as an exception to the scheduled annual review and update*