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Pandemic Accord Continuity Exercise Series

Russell Fox
Continuity Manager
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Region II

March 2015



Pandemic Accord Continuity Exercise Series

- **Two-year training and exercise series to increase readiness for a pandemic event.**
- **Designed to explore continuity planning for an influenza pandemic; foster partnerships between the public and private sectors; and identify potential practices, issues or shortfalls in pandemic plans.**
- **Enhance continuity planning among federal departments and agencies; U.S. Courts; state, tribal, local jurisdictions; and the private sector community.**



Sponsors

- **Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region II**
- **Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association**
- **Federal Executive Boards – New York City and northern New Jersey**
- **Department of Health and Human Services, Region II**
- **NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**
- **Clearing House Association**



Exercises Conducted

- **2013**
 - **Pandemic Tabletop Exercise: November 18 – 21**
 - **450 attendees; 140 organizations including Government Agencies, Financial Institutions/Banks, Non-profits and Higher Education**

- **2014**
 - **Wave 1 Functional Exercise: November 13**
 - **Wave 2 Functional Exercise: November 20**
 - **Recovery/Reconstitution Tabletop Exercise: December 1-3**
 - **2000 participants; 100 organizations including Government Agencies, Financial Institutions/Banks, Non-profits and Higher Education**



Webinar Training Sessions

- **Webinar I: Federal and Local Government Pandemic Planning**
- **Webinar II: Private Sector Response to a Pandemic – Human Resources, Power, Communications, and Internet Connectivity in a Pandemic Event**



Exercise Objectives

- Evaluate the ability to identify, establish, and manage necessary public-private partnerships during a pandemic influenza outbreak.
- Verify the receipt, notification, documentation, and implementation of continuity protocols to effectively maintain essential functions during a pandemic influenza outbreak.
- Substantiate mechanisms to effectively plan for, implement, and manage social distancing and other pandemic influenza protective measures among employees, stakeholders, and/or customers.
- Assess the effects of high levels of absenteeism on operational readiness during a pandemic influenza outbreak.
- Demonstrate business reconstitution approaches during post-wave recovery.



Exercise Scenario

- **A novel influenza virus causes a catastrophic pandemic. The virus has an attack rate of 20 to 25 percent and a case fatality rate of approximately 2 percent. In New York City, the pandemic results in worker absentee rates approaching nearly 50 percent during the most severe wave.**



Planning Considerations

- **Continuity planning for a pandemic event involves several unique considerations:**
 - **Personnel-based crisis**
 - **Usually will not effect physical infrastructure**
 - **Ongoing event that comes in “waves”**
 - **Not confined to one geographic area**



Management / Decision Making

- **Small Management and/or business continuity team defines the strategic response objectives and continuity of operation protocols for an organization.**
- **During a response, decision-making processes should be streamlined.**
- **Ongoing need to assess incident-management decisions and activities as the pandemic unfolds based on real time information.**
- **Situational assessments enable an organization to continuously evaluate which business units are being hardest hit and provide valuable information to help determine where to pull resources in order to cover the most critical needs.**



Value of Partnerships

- **Public-private partnerships are essential in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a pandemic:**
 - **Accurate information – determining fact from fiction**
 - **Health guidance – vaccinations**
 - **Transportation / Utilities**
 - **Regulatory relief may be necessary**



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Absenteeism

- Monitor the effects of high levels of absenteeism on operational readiness.
- Absenteeism Reasons – illness, caregivers for family, fear, stress, school closures.
- Findings:
 - 35% Absenteeism – sustain essential operations
 - 50% Absenteeism – organizations struggled to maintain essential functions, and, in several cases, companies had to curtail services or devolve essential functions to alternate locations.
- **Identify essential staff and critical functions, and understand the breaking points for your organization.**



Communication

- **Communicate early and often to employees, organizational leadership, clients and vendors.**
- **Develop a Communication Strategy:**
 - Manage copious amounts of information
 - Guard against rumors - Internet
 - Establish a rumor-control officer

Effectiveness of a communications strategy has to do with more than just what you communicate (content of the message), but also how you communicate (method of delivery) and to whom (intended audience).



Prevention and Mitigation Strategies for Staff

- **Telework**
- **Workplace social-distancing**
- **Devolve functions to less affected geographic locations**
- **Stagger staffing shifts**
- **Provide on-site medical intervention**
- **Step-up workplace cleaning practices**
- **Influenza Kits**



Challenges

- **Computer networks and telecommunications infrastructure**
- **Succession planning – is your bench deep enough**
- **Management of absenteeism – Accurate tracking of absenteeism**
- **Potential increase in operating expenses / possible decrease in profits**
- **Emotional strain of the crisis**
- **Knowing the minimum number of staff needed to perform a critical function**
- **Human resource policy issues**
- **Clear plans and guidance on flexible work arrangements**
 - **who has the authority to make decisions, which staff is eligible, and how this strategy would be implemented.**



Policy Gaps

- **Protecting employee privacy and the confidentiality of health information**
- **Avoiding discrimination in making services available to sick/potentially sick employees or customers**
- **Keeping non-essential personnel from reporting to work (e.g., what legal rights does a company have to prevent non-essential staff from coming to work?)**
- **Adjusting flexible work arrangement policies**
- **Permitting employees to return to work post-illness**
- **Special Needs Employees**



Other Considerations

- **Secondary events:**
 - Cyber, Terrorism, Natural Disaster - Is your organization equipped to handle more than one event at a time?
- **Devolution planning:**
 - Do you know where critical operations could be transferred in a crisis?
 - Triggers for Devolution
- **Reliance on vendors / partners to operate your business:**
 - Are they Prepared?



Recovery / Reconstitution of Business Operations

- Recovery and reconstitution planning is often reactionary
- The focus of business continuity planning is primarily on how organizations will respond to an incident:
 - Ensure continuity plans address reconstitution of normal business operations
 - Reconstitution planning needs to occur at the beginning of the crisis
 - Triggers to deactivate continuity plans



Recovery / Reconstitution of Business Operations

- **Establish both short-term and long-term recovery objectives for the organization:**
 - Have established processes for returning staff to their normal operations and assignments
 - Prioritize the re-establishment of functions and staffing needs
 - Plan to adjust workloads across the company
 - Organizations will likely struggle to replace employees in a timely manner
 - Organizations may be constrained by the ability of key vendors and partners to recover



Employee Considerations – Reconstitution

- **Assessing the recovery needs of individual employees is as important as assessing the needs of the organization.**
- **Communications, both internal and external, are as critical during recovery.**
- **Long-term health considerations**
- **Organizations need to balance a desire for proactive, timely communications with the need to respect employee privacy – HIPAA.**
- **Enormous need for employee assistance during the recovery phase – Managers should monitor employees physical and psychological health – training.**
- **How to properly recognize or reward employees who performed exceptionally during the pandemic.**



Post Recovery

- **An assessment process provides the foundation for recovery and reconstitution - Most organizations have established formal after-action processes; however, tracking corrective actions through implementation can prove difficult.**
- **Develop a coalition of firms to facilitate certain aspects of the post-incident assessment.**
- **Staff Training and Exercising**



Resources

- **Pandemic Exercise Resource Page:**
www.sifma.org/services/bcp/fema-pandemic-exercise-series
- **Webinars**
<http://www.fema.gov/continuity-operations/continuity-webinar-archives>
- **Continuity Information**
<http://www.fema.gov/continuity-operations>
- <http://www.fema.gov/es/continuidad-de-operaciones>



Contact Information

- Russell Fox
Continuity Manager, FEMA Region II
212-680-8504 Work
917-318-4859 Cell
russell.fox@fema.dhs.gov



QUESTIONS?

