TABLE TOP EXERCISE

Testing is the crux to creating and preserving a viable recovery plan. One popular way of starting a testing program is a table top exercise. This approach is cost effective and focuses on your employees and their specific recovery tasks. This checklist will guide you through steps and suggestions to plan and facilitate a successful table top exercise.

✓	Item	Description
	Identify team for table top exercise	Be sure key decision makers are involved, whether they are participants, or their absence is written into the scenario.
	Establish a crisis command center	The location of the table top exercise - conference bridges are recommended for remote parties to dial into. All information gathered will also be stored in this location.
	Log all activities	Appoint a scribe to document actions and open items for later review.
	Determine scenario	In doing so, be creative but practical. Take your risk assessment into consideration, and consider what will be appropriate based upon time allotted for this exercise.
	List assumptions	This includes closed roadways, key personnel that are absent, extent of damage and outages, expected duration of outages, etc.
	Rules for the exercise	Clearly define which actions will be taken vs. assumed since there isn't time to do each step in real-time that would be taken in a recovery.
	Split the scenario into sessions	Make these time-appropriate for the overall time of the exercise. After each session the participants/observers will review and document what was learned. With each session you can pose a new list of assumptions.
	What critical business functions were affected?	From the assumptions, the participants should identify which functions are crippled, and how to meet recovery time objectives for each function. This will assist in prioritizing what functions to recover first.
	Vendors	Will your third party vendors: phone service, IT, data back-up, facilities, etc. be involved in this exercise? If so, make sure you provide them with adequate notice related to their responsibilities in the exercise. If not, write into the rules how vendors will be simulated.
	Time frame	At the beginning of each session, clearly define the number of hours participants have to work on each session as well as how much time passes in 'exercise time' compared to 'real time'.

	Talking points for each session	After each session and list of assumptions is presented, have your team(s) ask/answer these questions: o What should happen now? o What do we know at this point? o What decisions do you have to make? o Who and how do we need to contact? o What documents / information are available to you? o What are the next steps?
	Post exercise review	Once you have completed the exercise, conduct a review before dismissing participants. Consider these questions: o Did this exercise confirm actions required at each phase of the crisis timeline? o Did this exercise identify procedures for escalation and the declaration process during a crisis? o Were all gaps, new ideas, and recommendations for improvement identified and recorded?
	Next steps	Build on what you've learned by making appropriate changes and clarifications to your written plan. Establish a date to complete another testing exercise. It is recommended that you minimally test your recovery plan on an annual basis.