

The “Simulation and Training Exercise Collaboratory” (SIMTEC)

Winter Blues! Exercise

CONTROLLER GUIDE



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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie Pearce". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "L" and a long horizontal stroke for the "P".

Laurie Pearce
SIMTEC Research Chair

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ABOUT THE CONTROLLER GUIDE

The Controller Guide contains the instructions on how to successfully deliver SIMTEC's Severe Weather Exercise. The exercise makes use of both online and print content. Consisting of a variety of functional activities, Players will be challenged to explore and apply fundamental Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) processes and activities. By conducting these exercises, personnel should be able to confirm the capabilities of the EOC to respond to a severe weather event, as well as identify areas where additional training, planning or resources are required. Subsequent exercises can then validate the efficiency of any "corrective actions" that are put into place.

It is important to note that this material is designed for experienced Exercise Controllers to deliver an exercise to experienced EOC staff. Additional training may be appropriate for both controllers and Players prior to delivery of the exercise.

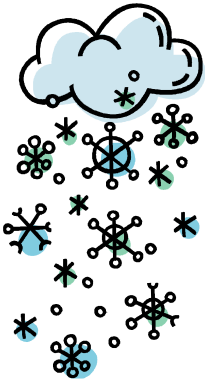
Please ensure you have reviewed this entire document prior to running your exercise.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SIMTEC is a multi-year project, based at the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC), which will assist Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) personnel to consider the psychosocial dimensions of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosives (CBRNE) and other hazardous events. The term **“psychosocial” refers to the mental well-being of an individual and the role of relationships and community in impacting that person’s mental health.** The project involves designing and conducting simulation exercises with complex disaster scenarios and injects specifically to elicit psychosocial responses from senior decision-makers in the EOC.

“Psychosocial” refers to the mental well-being of an individual and the role of relationships and community in impacting that person’s mental health.

Information collected from the exercises, focus groups, and Subject Matter Expert interviews throughout the research process will assist in the development of training materials and guidelines for psychosocial interventions by senior EOC personnel. Training EOC personnel to respond to the psychosocial consequences of disasters will reduce stress levels and enhance strategic and tactical decision-making. The exercises and training protocols will be publicly-available through an online collaboratory for use by any English-speaking jurisdiction with access to high-speed internet and emergency management protocols that include an EOC.



Winter Blues! is the first in a series of simulation exercises over the next four years that will include decontamination, diseases, natural hazards, and CBRNE events. This Controller Exercise Guidebook provides details on the administration of the SIMTEC Winter Blues! training exercise including background information, how to run the exercise, key training points to be emphasized and a list of frequently asked questions for Controllers.

PURPOSE AND DEVELOPMENT OF WINTER BLUES!

Exercise Winter Blues! was designed with two purposes in mind:

1. To serve as an opportunity to exercise a potentially real scenario.
2. To deliberately include inputs of psychosocial stressors.

This simulation exercise and training video can assist emergency management leaders in understanding and enhancing the decision-making processes and psychosocial interventions of senior EOC personnel during disasters.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXERCISE AND TRAINING PROTOCOLS

The simulation exercise and training points were developed with information from the Expert Working Group, interviews with a network of Subject Matter Experts, literature reviews, and



Dr. Donald B. Rix Public Safety Simulation Building

the combined expertise of the simulation specialists and researchers. Three phases of testing and modification took place, including a pilot, test, and final exercise.

All of the exercises were held in the Dr. Donald B. Rix Public Safety Simulation Building at JIBC. Four rooms were set up as four separate EOCs (“pods”), and a larger main room was used for the introduction and debriefing of the exercises. Data collected in these three phases were analyzed and used to create the final

exercise, the key training points and recommendations for best practice, the training video, and Lead Controller Guidebook (this document).

PILOT PHASE – FEBRUARY 2012

- Players were recruited for the simulation exercise and included EOC personnel from several communities, including first responders, city administrative staff and emergency planning coordinators
 - An introduction was provided to Players about the simulation exercise and the supplies and resources available in each pod
 - A three-hour simulation exercise was conducted – each pod was audio and video-recorded
 - Researchers and Subject Matter Experts observed the exercise in real-time from the control room

- A psychosocial debrief of the simulation exercise was held in the main room with all present
- Focus group interviews were held with each EOC pod at the end of the exercise. Interview questions concentrated on Players' perceptions of the realism of the exercise, the resources available to them, decision-making processes in the group, and the communications and injects throughout the exercise.
- Audio from each EOC pod was transcribed and analyzed, and corresponding video footage was analyzed for non-verbal behaviours
- Audio from focus group interviews was transcribed and analyzed
- The analysis resulted in a list of key themes, suggestions, and recommendations from Players for ways to improve the exercise and learning
- Adjustments were made to improve the communications and resources available and enhance the realism of the simulation exercise based on information collected during this phase

TEST PHASE – MARCH 2012

During the test phase, the recruitment process and simulation exercise were conducted as outlined above. Following the exercise, members of the research team held focus group interviews with two of the pods and individual interviews with Players from the other two pods to get a variety of perspectives. The interview questions focused again on the realism of the simulation, and the decision-making processes of the EOC team.



All audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed, and video footage was analyzed for non-verbal behaviours. In response to feedback from exercise Players, further adjustments were made to the exercise to increase its intensity and realism.

During the data analysis process, the SIMTEC research team identified five key common themes that emerged from the exercises. These five themes were chosen to include in the pre-exercise training video along with the recommendations for best practice. A draft of these training points and recommendations were emailed to a large group of Subject Matter Experts and the Expert Working Group for their review and feedback. Many of these experts responded with questions, concerns, suggestions, and recommendations for improving these training points. Several adaptations were made, resulting in the following five training points:

- 1. Taking breaks in the EOC**
- 2. Supporting gender and diversity in the EOC**
- 3. Providing psychosocial support to first and second responders on-site**

4. **Providing support to EOC personnel in cases of serious injury, death, or other traumatic events at the scene**
5. **Proactively deploying Emergency Social Services and Disaster Psychosocial Services**

“Emergency Social Services” (ESS) is the name given in Canada for the services that provide for the care of community residents. This can include providing shelter, food, clothing, family reunification, personal services including emotional support, first aid, pet care, child care and transportation. Not all provinces and territories define ESS similarly. “Disaster Psychosocial Services” (DPS) is a provincial program in British Columbia supported by the Provincial Health Services Authority.

The Disaster Psychosocial Services Volunteer Network (part of the DPS program) is a voluntary response group made up of registered professional mental health clinicians and paraprofessionals; including clinical counsellors, psychologists, social workers, police victim services and spiritual care representatives. DPS has been activated through Emergency Management B.C. since 2001. (Ministry of Health, n.d.)

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAINING VIDEO

The SIMTEC research team developed a training video to illustrate each of these points and to share recommendations for best practice with emergency management personnel in different jurisdictions. The topics for the training video are based on actual events and excerpts from the pilot and test exercises. Draft scripts for each scenario were written by the research team and sent to the Subject Matter Experts for review. The team also conducted two internal reviews at the JIBC involving Subject Matter Experts representing police, fire, emergency medical services, and Emergency Social Services. Once feedback was received and adjustments were made to these scripts, the Exercise Design Coordinator and Simulation Specialist at JIBC arranged for the filming of the draft training video for the final exercise.

FINAL EXERCISE – OCTOBER 2012

Prior to the start of the final exercise, Players viewed the training video. Again, researchers and Subject Matter Experts observed the exercise in real time. Following the exercise, focus group interviews were held with each pod. In addition to addressing the realism of the exercise and the decision-making processes in the pods, questions concentrated on the Players’ perceptions of the training video, including its effectiveness, its potential influence on decision making and actions taken in the pods, and its usefulness for future training.

Members of the Expert Working Group met with the SIMTEC research team the next day and provided feedback after viewing the training video. Adaptations were made to the training video and exercise following the analysis of all interviews with exercise Players, Subject Matter Experts, and the Expert Working Group.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

What we observed was interesting. First, the key training points that were identified in the pilot and test exercises remained issues of concern in the final exercise. We noted that viewing the training video prior to the exercise made a difference in that the Players in the final exercise did initially take steps to address the key points. For example, there was a concerted effort by the Players to take breaks during the exercise and to quickly deploy Emergency Social Services. However, as the exercise progressed and the Players became more engaged in the exercise activities and became more stressed, the training points were not adequately addressed – i.e., people stopped scheduling/taking breaks.

Recommendations from the Expert Working Group and from the focus groups with the Players supported the need to appoint someone in the EOC to ensure that the psychosocial concerns were addressed in a timely fashion throughout the exercise and that posters be developed to highlight the key training points and to have them posted in the EOC. Additionally, there were recommendations that the training video needed to be reconceptualised and to use first responders in the field to voice the key learning points to add to the credibility of the messaging. Accordingly, in consultation with Subject Matter Experts, our researchers and staff from a variety of professional areas a new training video was produced and additional supporting materials were developed.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Along with this Guidebook, the exercise videos, the training video and supporting materials are now available on the online SIMTEC Collaboratory. Online folders include:

1. EOC Resources
2. Materials for Players
3. Materials for Controllers

ABOUT WINTER BLUES!

Exercise Winter Blues! is a functional exercise, intended to validate the Players' ability to complete common EOC tasks. Additionally, the exercise prompts Players to consider the psychosocial impacts on first responders and the community as the EOC is faced with managing a number of challenging and traumatic events. Winter Blues! specifically includes a number of incidents or events that are designed to have psychosocial impacts on EOC personnel.



The exercise makes use of the fictional City of Denton. Denton is modelled on a number of medium sized communities found in Canada. With a population of 50,000 residents, Denton has many of the services and amenities one would find in any small city. It maintains a Police Service, Fire & Rescue Services, Emergency Medical Services (e.g., paramedics), and Emergency Social Services. Denton also maintains a variety of governmental departments, such as Public Works. More details about Denton can be found in the Initial Player Resources package.

The exercise scenario focuses on a severe winter storm impacting Denton. At the start of the exercise Players are informed they are now employees of the City of Denton, representing whichever agency they work for in the “real world.” For example, a “real” police officer would be acting in the role of a Denton police officer. As the exercise begins, Players receive notification that the Denton EOC is activating in anticipation of providing support to first responders. As the exercise unfolds, Players are confronted with a number of situations that they must decide how to deal with, e.g., power outages in part of the city, rerouting traffic due to a major traffic incident. In each case, Players rely on their training, experience, and plans to decide the most appropriate course of action.

It is important to keep in mind that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the problems faced by Players. Rather, Players are evaluated on whether they are able to demonstrate appropriate EOC activities while considering the psychosocial impacts of the events on first responders and the community. More information on evaluation can be found later in this document.

The training video, which is shown before the exercise will educate the Players as to some simple, but effective, ways they can address the stress that naturally occurs within an EOC. Additional information on psychosocial issues is located further on in the Guidebook.

EXERCISE AGENDA

A sample agenda for the day, including timings, is as follows:

Time Required	Activity	Comments
45 minutes	WELCOME & BRIEFING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Opening Remarks • Briefing
18 minutes	TRAINING VIDEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Training Video by Players
2:30 minutes	DENTON VIDEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of City of Denton video by Players
45 minutes	PLAYER FAMILIARIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players enter exercise room • Review of Denton documents and maps
180 minutes (3 hours)	Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start • End
45 minutes	DEBRIEFING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player feedback gathered • Exercise Evaluation Guides gathered
335 minutes (5 hours 35 min)	TOTAL	

GETTING STARTED – OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a Controller, you are responsible for making sure the exercise is planned, organized and delivered effectively. The information provided in this section will assist in making sure your exercise is a success.

IDENTIFYING PLAYERS

This exercise is intended to be used with personnel who are assigned roles within your jurisdiction's Emergency Operations Centre and who have already taken some EOC related training. If there are some personnel participating that have not taken EOC training, it is best to partner them up with those who have been trained. It is also beneficial to have a cross-section of personnel from various EOC agencies participating in the exercise. This exercise can be delivered with as few as three people or with larger groups of up to 10 people; however, six to eight persons would be common.

This exercise brings together representatives from various local government agencies to practice their response to various emergency events. Ideally, Players will include representatives from Police, Fire & Rescue Services, Emergency Medical Services, Public Works, Emergency Social Services, and those serving as Team Support Workers. In all cases, Players will play the role of Denton staff, drawing on their real world experience to fulfill the role. If you aren't able to find a Player from each agency, you are still able to continue with the exercise; however, the EOC Director will need to ensure the functions of that agency are still to be performed.

Team Support Workers are specially training psychologists, social workers or mental health workers to provide psychosocial support to EOC personnel and frontline staff as well as offer advice regarding psychosocial needs of the community residents.

PRE-TRAINING

In order to ensure the best success for Players, it is strongly recommended that exercise Players take part in Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) training prior to participating. Ideally, all exercise Players will also have some practical experience working in an EOC. For further information on EOC training, please contact the JIBC's Emergency Management Division – www.jibc.ca/emergency.

DETERMINING EXERCISE NEEDS

The exercise was designed around 3 specific objectives. These are:

1. Demonstrate the performance of common EOC functions
2. Demonstrate the management of incident information within the EOC
3. Demonstrate the use of an Action Planning process in creating a formal Action Plan

Each of these objectives is accompanied by specific *expected actions*. “Expected actions” is the term given to the specific actions Players need to perform in order to achieve the exercise objectives. These expected actions can be found in the Exercise Evaluation Guide document.

Each of the inputs delivered during the exercise will prompt Players to perform tasks related to one of these objectives. Keep in mind that the expected actions are relatively broad and describe EOC processes. If there are activities or practices specific to your agency that you would like to see validated, you are encouraged to develop additional objectives and expected actions.

Not all inputs are required for the exercise to successfully be completed. As the Controller, you may choose to omit or adjust some of the paper inputs to better meet the needs of your organization.

SETTING A DATE AND TIME

The exercise will take approximately five hours and 30 minutes to complete. The first 45 minutes will focus on briefing Players; followed by the training video and the orientation to the fictional City of Denton. The following three hours will focus on exercise play. The final 45 minutes will be used to debrief Players. When determining a date for your session it is always best to give Players at least two weeks’ notice.

ARRANGING A LOCATION

The ideal location for this exercise is your agency’s EOC. This will allow for Players to use the resources and materials that are regularly available in providing support to emergency



response. However, if the EOC is not available, you may choose an alternate location. These alternates may include boardrooms, classrooms, or other meeting areas. When arranging a location for your exercise, make sure it is away from regular office distractions. The meeting space should have room for the number of Players attending. Flip charts and paper or whiteboards should also be provided.

You will require 2 computers with speakers for playing the Input Video and the Status Board Video. You should also ensure that Players have pens, paper, and other regular office supplies.

Players will not need access to radios, telephones, fax machines or email. Players should not be in contact with actual agencies during the exercise – all communications are to be simulated between the Players and the Controllers.

CATERING

Catering should be ordered for this exercise. The level of catering required is at the discretion of the Controller but should include refreshments for a coffee break and a lunch service. One of the key learning points of the exercise is the importance on taking breaks and the need to provide healthy, nutritional food for EOC personnel.

Avoid having greasy food such as pizza in the EOC as this does not provide adequate nutrition to sustain individuals under stress, and can result in a lack of energy or stomach upset. Instead, make available fresh fruit and vegetables, sandwiches, hot and cold beverages such as coffee, tea, juice, and water for break times. Make available decaffeinated beverage options as well to discourage the over-consumption of caffeine and its negative effects on the body.



Energy bars and bottles of water should be included in the EOC room itself for times when individuals need a quick snack while continuing to work.

IDENTIFYING EXERCISE STAFF

In order to run the exercise, you will require Controllers and Evaluators. Controllers will provide inputs to Players, monitor the exercise, respond to Player questions, and realign Player activities as necessary. Evaluators will observe Player actions and determine the degree to which these activities achieve the objectives of the exercise. It is advised that you have a minimum of two Controllers and two Evaluators. The person taking the lead on the delivery of the exercise is known as the Lead Controller.

PREPARING MATERIALS

You will require the following materials to run the exercise. All of these materials are available for download from the SIMTEC website. **It is recommended that you download all of the videos.** While you also have the option to stream them during the exercise, there is the potential for small interruptions in the feed that may impact upon your exercise timing.

MATERIALS FOR CONTROLLER

These materials are necessary to manage and evaluate the exercise.

Item	Number	Description
Winter Blues! Exercise Controller Guidebook (this document)	1 copy per Controller	This document provides an overview of the exercise. This includes how to prepare for delivery of the exercise, how to control exercise play, and how to evaluate/follow-up on with Players once the exercise has been completed.
Winter Blues! Exercise Master Sequence of Events List	1 copy per Controller	The Master Sequence of Events List (MSEL) is a chronological timeline of Player actions and scripted messages and events that will occur during the exercise. This document is used by the Controller to identify when inputs are to be sent to Players.
Winter Blues! Exercise Inputs	1 copy for the Lead Controller	<p>During the exercise, information is sent to Players based on the timings listed in the MSEL. This information is provided in a series of vignettes found on the “Input Video.” The Inputs also contain copies of the documents that are to be provided to Players by the Controllers during the exercise.</p> <p>These inputs will provide the information needed to complete the objectives listed on the flipcharts and whiteboards located in the EOC.</p> <p>This document contains paper inputs that a Controller will hand to Players during the exercise. These documents should be printed in colour on standard letter sized paper.</p>
Winter Blues! Exercise Evaluation Guide	1 copy per Evaluator	The Exercise Evaluation Guide provides instructions to evaluators regarding the recording of their observations of Player actions and recommendations for improvement planning. The guide becomes a record of the level and quality of Player performance, and as such, is used to develop an After Action Report and Improvement Plan.

These are the videos required to run the exercise.

Item	Number	Description
Denton Video	1 copy to play on Computer	This video provides Players with an introduction to the City of Denton. It is intended to be played prior to the exercise, in order for Players to familiarize themselves with the City of Denton.
Training Video	1 copy to play on Computer	This video provides Players with the key psychosocial training points in preparation for the exercise. It is intended to be played prior to the exercise. This guidebook provides additional information to assist Controllers to answer any questions regarding the training points.
Winter Blues! Exercise Input Video	1 copy to play on Computer-1	This video contains a series of vignettes that describe events going on in the City of Denton. It is to be played to Players during the exercise.
Winter Blues! Exercise Status Board Video	1 copy to play on Computer-2	This video contains a series of mock-radio calls, made between first response agencies in the City of Denton. It also includes a status board that will automatically update each time a radio call is made. This video is to be played to Players during the exercise.

MATERIALS FOR THE PLAYERS

The materials will be used by the Players in the Exercise.

Item	Number	Description
Winter Blues! Player Handout	1 copy per Player, Controller, and Evaluator	The Player Handout contains all the information Players need to successfully take part in the exercise. The document is given to all staff and Players.
Initial Player Resources	1 copy per EOC	This package contains various documents that Players may wish to reference during the exercise. These include:

		<p>Denton Emergency Plan and Agreements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Denton Emergency Management Plan • The Denton/Murrayville Mutual Aid Agreement • Declaration of Local Emergency • Murrayville Agency and Department Resource List <p>Denton Resources and Demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denton Demographics • Denton Agency and Departmental Resource List • Emails with Current Available Resources -a series of emails describing the specific resources available to each agency on the day of the exercise.
EOC Forms	As many as needed by EOC	<p>This package contains forms that are commonly used in an EOC. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position Log • EOC Sign-in/Sign-out • Incident Report • Status Report • Action Plan • Resource Request • Situation Report
Stress Tip Cards		<p>These cards should be printed on 10.16 cm. (4 in.) X 7.62 cm. (3 in.) cards and made available in the EOC. They can be ordered free of charge from the Emergency Social Services Office at Emergency Management BC at http://www.ess.bc.ca/pubs/workercare.htm</p>

EOC RESOURCES

These resources will need to be posted and/or made available in the EOC

Item	Number	Description
Denton Map	1 copy per EOC / 1 copy for Controllers	The Denton Map provides an overview of the City of Denton. It is 152.5 cm. (60 in.) X 61 cm. (24 in.) and should be printed in colour by a professional printer or on a large plotter-type printer. This map should be posted on a wall accessible to Players.
EOC Response Goals Poster	1 copy per EOC	The Response Goals poster displays a list of standardized response goals that have been accepted by British Columbia. If appropriate, a copy of this poster should be printed and displayed in the EOC. It is 86.5 cm. (34 in.) X 56 cm. (22 in.) and should be printed in gray scale by a professional printer or on a large plotter-type printer. If used, this poster should be posted on a wall that is noticeable by Players.
Leadership Poster	1 copy per EOC	This poster was developed in British Columbia and reinforces some the key leadership principles for EOC personnel. They can be ordered free of charge in poster-size from the Emergency Social Services Office at Emergency Management BC at http://www.ess.bc.ca/pubs/workercare.htm
SIMTEC Training Points Poster	2 copies per EOC	This poster duplicates the key training points in the Training video and serves to reinforce the learning points. The posters should be printed and posted where they are easily seen by the Players. They can be printed on regular sized paper or on larger sized paper.
EOC Postings	1 copy of each (5 altogether) per EOC	These messages can be printed onto the EOC White Board or written on Flip Charts. The Players will be using these and adding to them or amending them during the exercise:

		<p>EOC Objectives</p> <p>This posting will serve to remind the EOC Director and staff about ongoing objectives to be met during the exercise.</p> <p>Weather</p> <p>This posting provides the current weather report for the exercise.</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>This is in preparation for Players to review the emails that provide the current resources available for the time of the exercise and post the findings in this place at the start of the exercise.</p> <p>Operational Period</p> <p>To set the stage for the exercise.</p> <p>Events</p> <p>This list provides the Players with a list of events underway in Denton on the day of the exercise.</p>
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CONTROLLER PREPARATION

When controlling the exercise, it is important to provide clear directions to all those involved. Review your materials in advance so that you are clear and confident during the exercise. When introducing the exercise it is always good to reinforce the applicable exercise objectives. This provides Players with a clear understanding of the outcomes. Have your room set-up and all materials prepared in advance so that you can focus on welcoming Players at the start of the session.

When the exercise is underway, the Controllers monitor the exercise and attempt to align Player activities to the objectives. This may involve clarifying any information provided in inputs (as necessary), providing mentoring, and helping resolve conflict. Controllers should not dominate conversations or turn to an instructing format. The intent of the exercise is for Players to work through the materials on their own. The scenario, inputs and tasks should prompt Players in addressing the outcome. During the exercise, if there is significant need to

explain EOC processes and practices, then this likely identifies a need for further training prior to subsequent exercising.

One Controller will simulate all agencies not taking part in the exercise. Players wishing to speak to outside agencies will speak directly with this Controller. This individual will attempt to provide answer and feedback based on how agencies would most likely respond to each



request. There may be times when this Controller needs to provide information or details that are not provided in these materials. In this event, the Controller should draw from their own experiences to provide realistic answers to Player questions. For example, one of the power substations is damaged during the exercise. The Controller has the leeway to identify which parts of the city are affected (based on the status of the Players performance). This Controller needs to be very familiar with the exercise materials so that they can

provide appropriate feedback. Additionally, this Controller should gather the various documents prepared by the Players. These may include completed Position Logs, Incident Reports, Status Reports, Action Plans, and Situation Reports. These can then be reviewed and evaluated based on agency standards.

GETTING STARTED – PSYCHOSOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the Lead Controller, you are responsible for the administration of the exercise, and organization of all of the necessary resources and supplies for the day. You should not be participating directly in the exercise; even though in your day-to-day job you may act as the EOC Director. This section provides information on what to keep in mind when preparing to conduct the Winter Blues! Exercise with your EOC personnel, including:

- The presence of strong, positive leadership and advanced planning to maximize training benefits
- The importance of the physical and emotional well-being of EOC team members
- Awareness of potential psychosocial stressors and reactions during the exercise
- Availability of appropriate psychosocial supports for EOC members

Note that these principles remain the same, regardless of the activation level of an EOC and the number of people within it.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Several common reactions were identified among exercise Players, based on observations from the pilot, test, and final simulation exercises, including:

- Reluctance to take breaks
- Tension between first responder (uniformed) and non-first responder (non-uniformed) Players
- The importance of clear leaders in the decision-making process
- Individuals being excluded from the decision-making process, not being heard by other team members, and missing an opportunity to articulate their views on a specific issue
- Non-verbal signs of stress, fatigue, frustration such as sweating; face in hands; rapid clicking of pens; getting distracted and/or separating oneself from the rest of the team by turning chair away from the group and no longer providing input in the decision-making process

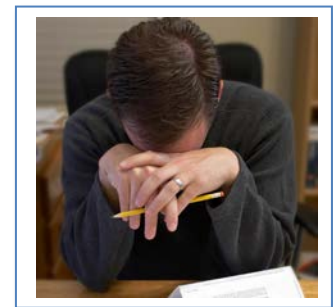
As mentioned previously, this exercise is designed to test Players for their ability to respond to regular EOC actions and to take into account psychosocial considerations. A strong leader first considers the physical and emotional well-being of each team member, as this is the first priority in any organized emergency response. It will be very important for the person who will be acting as the EOC Director to take into account the **different needs** of all members of the EOC.

As the Lead Controller it will be important for you to assess in advance of the exercise the **psychosocial issues** that may arise during the exercise and how these can impact each EOC member. This assessment can best be conducted by reading the material in this section and viewing the exercise videos in their entirety before you run the exercise. This will be valuable in planning appropriate supports before, during, and after the exercise. ⁱ

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

To ensure that your team’s physical needs are met throughout the duration of the exercise, advanced planning is required. Be sure to make available **beverages** such as water and juice, and **healthy food options** such as fruit, sandwiches, and energy bars. It is important to include decaffeinated beverage options in the EOC. While many team members will want to consume caffeinated coffee and soft drinks in an effort to remain alert, discouraging excess consumption of caffeine will help to reduce over-stimulation of workers’ internal systems and the “crash” effect that follows.

In the community exercises, observations of the EOC pods showed that very few workers took breaks, and signs of stress and fatigue were exhibited by many of the individuals. As the intensity of the exercise increased, the pod’s ability to make clear decisions appeared to decrease. Taking breaks in the EOC is a key training point in this exercise. When workers do not look after themselves, consequences such as worker burnout, an increased risk of errors in judgment, and hostility among team members can occur.ⁱⁱ Strong leadership and modeling by the EOC Director is required to ensure that members are **taking appropriate breaks** in order to manage their stress levels and complete their operational tasks effectively.^{iii,iv}



EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Winter Blues! incorporates various **stressors** that can be experienced in the EOC, including:

- Serious injury or death - news and images of the serious injury and death of a first responder, children and other civilians; sounds of children crying
- Information – too much or too little information about an incident, and inaccurate information received via social media
- Political pressure - related to status, power, and disclosure of information with demands from politicians to go beyond standard EOC operating procedure

- Stressful EOC environment – high noise levels; extreme work load; safety issues; time pressures
- Weather – extreme weather conditions and negative weather impacts make travel difficult, interrupting power supply to the community, compromising building structures
- Media – Increased and/or negative media scrutiny of emergency operations

Emergency management personnel in an EOC can include first and second responders, volunteers, individuals from receiver agencies and personnel from various government departments. Given the range of experiences that each member of the EOC brings to the group, there will be a **range of reactions** to typical stressors. Positive leadership is crucial for assessing the variety of psychosocial needs in the EOC, and ensuring appropriate support to all team members.

PSYCHOSOCIAL REACTIONS TO STRESSORS

The range of **reactions** among EOC Players includes both verbal and non-verbal behaviours and can include the following as well as others:

- **Behavioural** – pounding the table; attempting to mediate; leaving the room in frustration; yelling; not listening attentively when requested
- **Cognitive** – appearing confused; forgetting information; writing things down; making lists; setting priorities
- **Emotional** – using black humour; expressing rage or anger; expressing joy or sadness; crying
- **Physiological** – excessive sweating, trembling or shaking; increased caffeine intake; getting up to stretch; keeping hydrated
- **Spiritual** – Questioning one’s religious faith or criticizing another’s faith; praying according to one’s faith

In the community-based exercises, several of the first responder Players described the need to avoid addressing their emotions in order to carry on with their operational tasks. Acknowledging that not every EOC member may be able to do this, one first responder stated,

“...for somebody maybe who is inexperienced or typically doing a desk job where they don’t deal with much more than emails or phone calls, that might have a different impact on them. And as a team member or as a Director I think you have to look at that differently and recognize that.”

Another exercise Player explained,

“I think a lot of times, whether you’re Police, Fire or Ambulance, it’s like okay well I’ve got to separate my emotions from what needs to get done... I could think of a number of circumstances where I’ve been in situations where the emotional part of it came after it was all said and done.”

This comment demonstrates that although some Players can separate their emotions in-the-moment, there may be psychosocial needs that arise later that need to be addressed.

Disturbing information in the EOC must be acknowledged, respected, and addressed. It is important to note that EOC team members may be feeling stressed; however, they may not state this to the group for fear of appearing weak or unable to handle the situation. Leadership in sharing information, asking for acknowledgement, and providing opportunities for support to individuals in the EOC is required to address the different reactions that occur.

It is essential to make arrangements in advance for a **Team Support Worker** trained to work in disasters and, ideally, in psychological first aid to be present in the EOC. This person is available



throughout the exercise to provide psychosocial support to EOC team members that may be triggered or stressed, and can assist you with organizing supplies, food and beverages. They can also work with the EOC Director to monitor break-taking throughout the day. At the end of the training exercise, the team support worker can conduct a brief demobilization with the team. It is also important to make available a psychosocial tip sheet with strategies for worker

care during and after the exercise, which team members can take at their discretion.

DELIVERING THE EXERCISE

Once you are ready to begin the exercise, there are a number of tasks to perform.

SETTING UP THE ROOM

Prior to the exercise, you will need to setup the room for use by Players. You may choose to use your agencies EOC, or alternatively, you could use a classroom or boardroom. To setup the room, you will need to perform the following tasks:

1. Confirm the facility is available for the entire length of the exercise (approximately 4 hours)
2. Print out the Initial Player Resources document and lay these materials out in the EOC
3. Gather office supplies for use by Players (pens, pencils, paper, laptops, etc.)
4. Gather copies of EOC forms and templates
5. Write the EOC Postings on flipcharts or whiteboards in the EOC. One set of these flipcharts/whiteboards should be created per exercise group. Players will use these objectives and priorities to structure their initial actions during the exercise. Players can subsequently update, remove, or add to these objectives & priorities.
6. Post the EOC Posters around the room
7. Bring in adequate water and healthy snacks for Players during the exercise
8. Locate the two computers so that they can be seen by all the Players

PLAYER BRIEFING

Prior to the exercise, Players should be given a briefing about the rules and format of the exercise. This briefing can be structured around the Player Handout. During this briefing, the Lead Controller should walk all Players, Controllers and Evaluators through the various sections, including: SIMTEC overview; FAQ's; Rules; Artificialities; Assumptions; Communications. At the end of the briefing, you should play the Denton Community video for the Players. The entire briefing will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Once the briefing is complete, you may send the Players into the exercise room and allow them to review the Denton materials that have been provided. Player should be encouraged to read the Denton Emergency Plan, the Denton Demographics, and the Denton/Murrayville Mutual Aid Document. Once the exercise begins, Players will receive a briefing on the various key landmarks in the City.



STARTEX

Once the Players are ready to begin the exercise, you will start both the Input Video and the Status Board Video at the same time. The Input Video will then play a series of vignettes that setup the exercise scenario. The Status Board Video will show a blank status board and will provide some background noise. The vignettes will last approximately 8 minutes. Players will then have around 12 minutes to continue organizing the EOC – no inputs will come in from either video during that time. At the 20 minute mark, both videos will begin playing inputs to the Players. The Input Video will display mock news casts and phone calls. The Status Board Video will play mock radio calls and will update automatically with the information provided in the call.

CONTINUITY

If the Controllers decide to pause the exercise (e.g., Players are becoming overwhelmed), they will need to pause both videos at the same time. Restarting streaming videos may be difficult; it is recommended that you only pause videos that have been downloaded and which are playing off the computer's hard drive.

MASTER SEQUENCE OF EVENTS (MSEL) AND INPUTS

During the exercise, the Master Sequence of Events List will detail the approximate timings and lengths of the various inputs Players will receive. The Inputs document provides a detailed script of what is being said. As the Controllers follow the MSEL, they should pay close attention as to when a document appears, as this indicates the Controllers are to provide a print copy of this document to the Players.

COMMUNICATION

As mentioned earlier, one Controller will play an active role in communicating with the exercise Players throughout the exercise. This Controller will:

- Provide printed copies of documents from the Exercise Input Package to the EOC Director. This is to be done when at the timings indicated on the Master Sequence of Events List
- Simulate outside agencies, answering Player questions and providing feedback similar to the answers that would be provided by outside agencies
- Gather the documents created by the Players.

This Controller has some leeway in the types of answers provided to Players depending on how well the exercise is proceeding. For example, a request for Mutual Aid is received by Players during the exercise, however the urgency of the request is not provided. If Players appear to have the exercise well in hand, the Controller can indicate the request is urgent and requires an answer within the next few minutes. If Players are struggling and appear overwhelmed, the Controller can indicate the request is not urgent and can be dealt with as time allows.

ENDEX

The exercise, aside from briefings and debriefings, will last 3 hours. The first 20 minutes of the exercise is for Players to setup; the subsequent 160 minutes are for the exercise play. At the 180 minute mark, the Input Video will stop providing inputs. The Status Board Video will continue on with background noise for approximately 3-4 minutes. At this time, Controllers should inform Players that the exercise has concluded and that a debriefing will now be held.

EVALUATION, DEBRIEFING AND CONCLUSION

UTILIZING EVALUATORS

Exercise evaluators, using the Exercise Evaluation Guide, will observe, analyze and record Player actions to assess whether the exercise objectives are being met. Evaluators must take care not to skew the results of the exercise by intruding on the exercise. Interactions with Players should be avoided. Evaluators will work with the Lead Controller to produce an evaluation report that identifies any issues and or gaps observed during the exercise.

EVALUATION PROCESS

In order to successfully evaluate the exercise, evaluators need to perform the following actions:

- Position themselves so that they can view the Players but not intrude on their conversations
- Observe the action related to the objectives identified in their Exercise Evaluation Guide (expected actions listed are not a complete list of actions but rather a guideline)
- Follow the framework provided in the Exercise Evaluation Guide for recording their observations (this may be in the form of written statements, completing checklists, recording the time it takes to complete specific tasks, etc.)
- If required, perform a preliminary analysis of their observations, offering insights into why conclusions were made or specific actions were performed
- Alert the Controller if any problematic situations develop
- Attend the Player debrief, updating their Exercise Evaluation Guides as necessary
- Submit their completed Exercise Evaluation Guide(s) to the Controller following the exercise

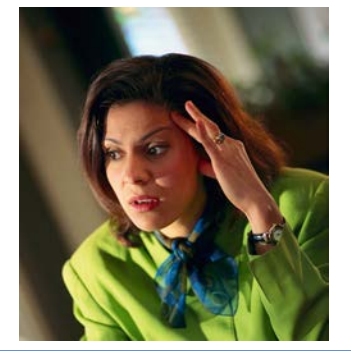


CONDUCTING DEBRIEFS

There are two types of debriefings which should be held following the exercise. One is an operational debrief and the other is a psychosocial debriefing.

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEBRIEFINGS

It is important to recognize that even though Winter Blues! is just an exercise, the realism of the scenarios and the sounds and visual pictures will undoubtedly result in increased stress



levels of the Players. It is important to provide an opportunity for the Players to acknowledge these stressors and to remind them that there are a number of strategies that can be used to help in coping with the stress of this exercise, or any stressful situation. This would typically be conducted before the Operational Debriefing.

Ideally, a Team Support Worker would lead this debriefing. There are a number of options to consider and the choice of debriefing approach will depend upon the degree of stress experienced by the Players. Some of the options are:

Demobilization is a meeting that involves all personnel when the EOC is deactivated after an event. It is approximately 30 minutes long, and information is provided on the signs and symptoms of stress, and coping strategies. The demobilization meeting is designed to assist personnel in moving from the high stress incident and back into their typical routine. It also provides an opportunity for the leader of the EOC to thank all of the personnel for their work.

Defusing provides a brief and informal opportunity for workers to vent their feelings and thoughts about the event. This could be used if the EOC personnel were deeply affected by the exercise. It is typically offered at the end of a disaster prior to workers leaving the EOC, in order to assist them in preparing for their return to their regular jobs.

Psychological First Aid is defined as “immediate psychosocial support following a traumatizing incident, the psychological equivalent of medical first aid.”^v The goals of psychological first aid are to protect the individual from ongoing exposure to trauma, to direct the individual to engage in active coping and accessing his or her own resources for social support, and to connect the individual to these resources.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is a structured crisis intervention tool designed to be used with a homogenous response group after exposure to the same traumatic event. This would only be used following an exercise if the EOC personnel were really impacted by the experience. It offers a way to share experiences and personal reactions to the event in a supportive group setting, and is available to those who wish to attend. This intervention is typically offered within 72 hours after the event, and is facilitated by a mental health professional and a peer

counsellor with specific training in using the technique, who was not involved as a member of the EOC team.

As the Lead Controller you should be aware that even a relatively benign experience can trigger a psychosocial response in anyone. There may be something about a particular scene or sound that reminds the person about some past unresolved trauma and the immediate reactions that these reminders trigger may catch the person by surprise. Having a Team Support Worker in the EOC, whether in an exercise or during the real thing, can assess and provide support without being intrusive when required.

OPERATIONAL DEBRIEFINGS

A formal debrief should be held following the delivery of the exercise. The debrief provides an opportunity for the Players/groups to share and comment on the work they completed and for the evaluators and Controller to comment on the expected outcomes as referenced in the applicable Exercise Evaluation Guide. All Players should be given the opportunity to comment during the debrief. Conversations should focus on:

- Areas where Players felt they performed well
- Areas where Players feel they require additional training, exercising, and mentoring
- Any item that requires immediate changes (e.g., updating an emergency plan)
- Potential next steps for Players



FEMA Photo/Michael Rieger

COLLECTING AND ACTING ON FEEDBACK

Following the exercise, the Controller or other designated personnel will be responsible for collecting and consolidating various feedback from the exercise. This could include group responses to exercise questions, completed paper work and records of activities performed. As part of your next steps, this information should be analyzed and an After Action Report

should be created which includes an Improvement Plan. An ultimate goal of exercising is to learn so that plans, procedures and related training can be improved resulting in subsequent exercises that are not identifying the same corrective actions as in past.

CONCLUDING THE EXERCISE

Following the debrief, Players should be told the exercise has been formally concluded. Controllers should gather the Evaluation Guides from the Evaluators, gather the materials used during the exercise, and return the room to its original state.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

As the Lead Controller, the following questions may come to mind as you prepare for the day:

What are the qualifications of a Team Support Worker?

The Team Support Worker is a professional with specific training in disaster psychosocial services, including skills in providing immediate trauma intervention. They are attentive to both the physical and emotional needs of the EOC team, and can advise leaders in the EOC on strategies for addressing the psychosocial needs of the team during the operational period.^v The EOC Director should introduce the Team Support Worker to the team, and explain his or her role in the EOC, in order to promote the inclusion of this person and the recognition of psychosocial needs and support in the EOC.

What is the role of the Team Support Worker?

In the EOC, the role of the Team Support Worker includes:^{vi}

- Facilitating the relay of messages to and from families of emergency responders for the purpose reducing stress levels by providing updates on well-being, and what is happening at home and in the EOC
- Coordinating with EOC personnel to ensure appropriate and timely psychosocial support to emergency responders in the field
- Consulting the EOC leader and assisting with strategies to encourage worker care and address psychosocial needs of EOC team members (organizing healthy food and beverage options for EOC personnel; arranging for a calm, quiet space for breaks)
- Observing the EOC environment and interacting in an informal way with other EOC team members, providing brief interventions as necessary (e.g. taking a break with another team member; talking over a cup of coffee)
- Providing consultation and support to EOC leader in mediating conflicts and managing difficult decisions
- Conducting a demobilization or debriefing once the EOC is deactivated

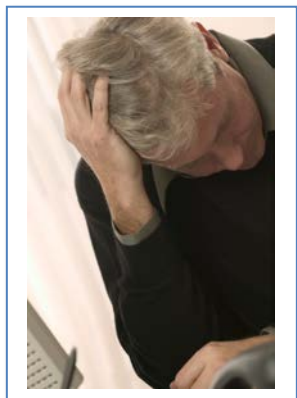


What if we don't have a Team Support Worker? If you do not have a Team Support Worker available, then the Risk Manager or whoever is responsible for safety must recognize and consider strategies to address both **physical** and **emotional** safety among EOC personnel.

What if the EOC personnel feel that the recommendations in the Training Video are not valid or supported?

Change can be difficult sometimes, and it is important to note that these are not the only solutions to consider when addressing psychosocial factors in emergency response. The EOC team may have other solutions that work well, and what is most important is to recognize the psychosocial needs, and make sure to address them at the time.

What if an exercise Player gets really upset and quits the exercise?



The role of the Team Support Worker is to be attentive to both the verbal and non-verbal behaviours of Players in the exercise. If a Player is visibly upset, the Team Support Worker can use their skills to approach the individual discreetly and check in with them to determine what resources they might need for support, such as a short break to rehydrate, or an opportunity to remove him- or herself from the EOC and get support in response to disturbing information. If the Player quits the exercise, the Team Support Worker will make himself or herself available to speak with the Player about their experience and provide a list of resources for further support if needed.

What kind of food should I have on-hand in the EOC?

The types of food that should be available have been addressed earlier in this document; however, while it is important to have water and healthy quick snacks in the EOC it is equally important not to serve meals or more substantial snacks in the EOC. EOC personnel should be encouraged to leave the EOC to take a break in order to have their meals. If the meals are served in the EOC, the staff are more likely to eat at their desks and not take the required breaks.

What can I do to get organizational buy-in to participate?

Consider which agencies you would like to invite to participate in this simulation exercise, and approach senior-level personnel who are strong, positive leaders and well-respected by their peers in emergency management. This exercise provides an opportunity for realistic, hands-on, practical group training with accessible, no-cost training materials available for support via the SIMTEC online Collaboratory. Emphasizing the benefits of training, such as a greater consideration of psychosocial factors in decision-making and community response during emergencies, and the consequences of not engaging in proactive training, should help to secure organizational buy-in.

Is taking breaks really realistic when working in an EOC? How do I ensure this happens?

Yes, taking breaks while working in an EOC is both realistic and necessary for worker care. Often, individuals may feel as though they will miss something if they leave the EOC, and they are concerned about letting their team down. They might experience an adrenaline rush, and the need to eat, rest, and rehydrate may be suppressed. Observations from the previous simulation exercises and background research in emergency management indicate that the cognitive decision-making ability of individuals and groups in stressful circumstances decreases over time, while the risk of decision-making errors increases. Concern for the safety and well-being of their own family members may also distract EOC members from performing the tasks required of them. Strong leadership is required to identify appropriate times for break-taking and direct members to do so, and to ensure that tasks are covered, and individuals are briefed upon their return to the EOC. As the Lead Controller, you can assist the Players in appointing the most suitable leader for this role.

How do I manage tension and conflict among Players during the exercise?

Prior to the beginning of the exercise, the key training points for the day can be highlighted for exercise Players, including respecting gender and diversity in the EOC. Strong leadership in the EOC involves making sure that everyone has an opportunity to share their views and be heard by others. If tension and conflict occur among EOC team members during the exercise and are not addressed, the demobilization process at the end of the day can provide an opportunity to discuss as a group what happened, and what can be learned from it.

Is it necessary to go through the demobilization process at the end of the exercise?

Yes, the Team Support Worker will lead the group through a brief discussion to process their thoughts and experiences in the simulation exercise. This step is important to reduce the impact of any stress reactions from one's involvement in the exercise.

Where can I find a psychosocial tip sheet that I can make available to exercise Players?

The two-sided stress tips card included as Player resources can be ordered free of charge from the Emergency Social Services Office of British Columbia EMBC website. <http://www.ess.bc.ca/pubs/workercare.htm> and have been included as Player resources.

OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

The SIMTEC Project Team would like to know about your experience as the Lead Controller and hear your thoughts on the simulation exercise and training protocols. We are happy to receive your feedback on topics such as:

- The realism of the exercise
- Your experience in accessing and using the online Collaboratory
- The effectiveness of the training video component
- Reactions to the key training points
- Any challenges in implementing the training points
- Decision-making processes in the EOC during the exercise Focus Guide

We would appreciate those who have participated in the exercise responding to all or any of the following questions:

1. What is your first impression of the simulation exercise?
2. How did the exercise work AS A SIMULATION for you?
 - a) What was realistic about the simulation?
 - b) What would make it more realistic?
3. Was the exercise structured at the appropriate level for EOC management?
 - a) What would make it more appropriate?
4. What would you say about the exercise injects?
5. What did you notice in terms of decision-making among participants in your pod?
 - a) What contributed to the decision-making
 - b) Who did you feel was most decisive during the exercise?
 - What contributed to that?
 - Who did you feel was excluded during the decision-making?
 - What contributed to that?
6. What do you consider the critical decision-making points during the exercise?
7. When in the exercise did you notice the possibility of including some psychosocial considerations?
 - a) What affected your decision to act on this psychosocial consideration?
 - b) What was it specifically that prompted your awareness of a psychosocial consideration?
 - c) What were the key opportunities for psychosocial considerations that you recognized in the exercise?

8. What suggestions would you make for improving the exercise?
9. Did you find the training video informative and useful?
 - a) When would this training be most effective?
10. Do you have any other comments you would like to add?

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ⁱ See Blythe (2006) for the three key components of strategic leadership during crises: Be, Know, Do.

ⁱⁱ See Fisher and Abrahamson (2002) for details on the characteristics of effective leaders, and the role of managers in worker stress.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Everly, Beaton, Pfefferbaum, & Parker (2008) for a description of the benefits of break-taking while working under stressful circumstances.

^{iv} See Young, Ford, and Watson (2007) for details on how to take breaks during disaster response to ensure coverage of tasks and availability of peer support.

^v See British Columbia Disaster Worker Care Committee (2007) for further details on the qualifications of Team Support Workers and other Disaster Psychosocial Services professionals.

^{vi} See Meyers & Hiley-Young (1994) for more information on the qualifications of mental health professionals and their role in EOCs.