



Power Outage Tabletop Exercise



POWER
OUTAGE

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Power Outage Tabletop Exercise Participant Guide

For information on how to lead the tabletop exercise, see the accompanying document “Emergency Exercises Training Package Instructions” within the Emergency Exercises Package.

In this tabletop exercise, you should imagine that you are a member of your school’s emergency planning team and that you have access to only the resources and systems you currently have in place. You will discuss your response to a power outage.

A scenario will first be presented to you, which is hypothetical, and then be followed by individual questions. After each question is asked, you should pause and discuss it with your group. Additional information on how the scenario unfolds, called injects, is provided, and questions are then posed on how the school would respond.

Scenario

It is 9:30 a.m. in late March, and your classes are in session. The weather is sunny with warm temperatures in the low 70s. Without warning, the power throughout the school goes out. The power also appears to be out in the whole community. The school’s emergency generator, which powers critical building systems, turns on automatically.

More specific information will now be presented with Inject #1.

Inject #1

The school administrator decides to convene your school’s response team, of which you are a member, to decide the next steps. As the weather is warm and daylight is sufficient, the team decides to continue classes, albeit with some adjustments to the schedule.

Discussion Questions

Now, please answer the following questions. As you answer them, have a volunteer take notes to help later with the exercise debrief.

What is the team’s first steps? Do you have existing protocols for what to do in this type of situation, such as protocols in the Power Outage Annex to your school’s or school district’s emergency operations plan (EOP)?

1. What steps do you need to take to help prevent any additional emergencies, damage, or injuries from occurring when the power is restored, such as when electrical or science equipment is turned off? How would your actions be different if you have, or do not have, a working emergency generator?
2. With whom would you need to communicate, such as your district office or a liaison with the power company? How would you do that? Do you have established protocols in the Communications and Warning Annex?
3. How would instruction be adjusted for classes that require power (e.g., science classes, industrial arts)? Where would classes be held on the school’s grounds if existing classrooms do not have enough light to continue instruction? Will there be enough light to complete the entire school day? Can afternoon/extracurricular activities, such as sports, be conducted?
4. Now that the team has discussed these questions, you’ll hear how the scenario hypothetically unfolds with Inject #2.

Inject #2

About 30 minutes later, the power is still out. The students are calm and seem to be actually enjoying the novelty of being at school without power. The school administrator speaks to a liaison at the local power company, who says that they are still trying to identify why the power went out and the extent of



the outage. The person says that, at the moment, they are not able to determine the extent of the outage or predict when power will be restored. The response team reconvenes.

Discussion Questions

Now, answer the following questions:

1. Would you need to update anyone about what is happening at the school? If so, to whom and how often? Again, are those actions described in the Communications and Warning Annex?
2. How would the outage impact services the school provides, such as food programs? Do you have established protocols for what to do in that situation? Where would you find them — does the Continuity of Operations Annex contain such protocols?
3. How would the power outage impact specific populations, such as those with disabilities or access and functional needs or students who need medicine regularly? How would you identify and address their needs?

Now, we're moving on to Inject #3.

Inject #3

While you are still meeting with the team, you receive word from the power company liaison that the outage was caused by human error at a nearby facility. In addition to your school, the outage has affected approximately 5,000 homes and two other nearby schools. The power will likely be restored in the early evening.

Discussion Questions

Again, answer the following questions:

1. What are your next steps? For example, would you have an early dismissal, or would you take other actions, such as transporting students to another location?

2. If you do transport students to another location, how would you move them there? How would you ensure that they are fed there? And how would you reunite students with their parents and legal guardians, and can this information be found in the Family Reunification Annex?
3. Again, with whom would you need to communicate about your decision? Can this information be found in the Communications and Warning Annex?
4. Are there any other groups or organizations that use the school after instruction ends, or in the evening, that would need to be notified about the power outage and the status of the school? How would you do that?

This concludes the exercise.

Conclusion

An exercise debrief — called a “hot wash” — should now be conducted, and an after-action report developed, which identifies and documents gaps, shortfalls, and lessons learned. You should consider

1. What did the exercise demonstrate about how the school or school district would respond to this type of emergency event?
2. What went well in the exercise?
3. What lessons were learned?
4. What gaps in the school's or school district's EOP, including annexes, were identified?
5. How will the EOP and annexes be revised, if needed?
6. Who will be responsible for making these revisions?
7. By when will these revisions be made?

Resources on Preparing for Power Outages That Impact K-12 Schools

Power Outage Annex Development

[Addressing Technological Hazards That May Impact Students, Staff, and Visitors](#), Web Page (REMS TA Center). Contains resources from the REMS TA Center, the U.S. Department of Education, and other Federal agencies related to planning for technological hazards, which includes power failure.

[The Role of School Facility Managers in School Safety Efforts](#), Webinar (REMS TA Center). Explores the role of school facility managers in supporting school emergency operations plan development, including power outage planning.

Power Outage Exercises

[Tool Box](#), Web Page (REMS TA Center). Contains materials for conducting a tabletop exercise of a power outage scenario, which were created by a state education agency, state school safety center, and local education agency. Also contains materials for planning, conducting, and evaluating emergency exercises.

Power Outage Mitigation

[Food Safety and Food Defense: Developing a Contaminated Food Annex](#), Fact Sheet (REMS TA Center). Offers an overview of food safety and food defense for schools, including information on how food safety planning can protect against contamination due to hazards such as power outages, and how food safety and food defense can be incorporated into school emergency operations plans.

[Avoid Foodborne Illness During Temporary Power Outages](#), Web Page (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS]). Details key measures to ensure food safety during temporary power outages.

[Food Safety in a Disaster or Emergency](#), Web Page (HHS). Provides information and supplemental resources for keeping food safe before, during, and after emergencies, including power outages.

[Food and Water Safety During Power Outages and Floods](#), Web Page (HHS, U.S. Food and Drug Administration). Outlines preparedness considerations and recommended actions to maintain food and water safety before, during, and after a power outage.

[Mitigation and Resiliency Strategies for Schools and Institutions of Higher Education](#), Webinar (REMS TA Center). Presents key considerations for mitigation, the process for including mitigation activities in planning efforts, how school mitigation and resiliency plans integrate with those at the local and state levels, and practical examples of how schools have made their campuses more resilient to emergencies.

General Power Outage Safety

[Power Outages](#), Web Page (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA]). Details actions to take before, during, and after a power outage. Also provided are links to related information, such as generator safety, food safety, and considerations for those with disabilities or access and functional needs.

[Power Outages](#), Web Page (HHS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Provides resources on three topics related to power outages — What You Should Know, Worker Safety, and Healthcare Facilities. Additional information on power failure-related emergencies, such as extreme heat and floods, is also available.

[Be Prepared for a Power Outage](#), Publication (DHS, FEMA). Shares facts about power outages, as well as preparedness and protective actions that individuals can take to stay safe before, during, and after a power outage.