**Facilitator Guide**

Definition of a Tabletop Exercise: What it is? What you are supposed to accomplish?

* Discussion-based exercises are normally used as starting points in the building-block approach to the cycle, mix, and range of exercises. These types of exercises typically highlight existing plans, policies, mutual-aid agreements, and procedures.
* Tabletops – (TTXs) involve discussion and problem-solving to determine if adequate policies, procedures, and resources exist to manage an emergency.

The Top Five Tips to Effectively Facilitate an Exercise

1. Be Invested
   1. A good facilitator knows the plans and has a vested interest in having a good constructive exercise. S/He knows the exercise tests a facility’s ability to respond and takes that seriously.
   2. A good facilitator should understand the systems of planning and the organization on a higher level.
   3. A good facilitator knows the objectives. They should be a content expert but not allow their biases to dictate the results. Maintains a neutral perception throughout the facilitation process
   4. They should keep the exercise as realistic and relevant as possible.
   5. A good facilitator listens more than talks, and never provides the easy answer, instead allowing the group to reach a conclusion on their own.
2. Be a Good Host
   1. A good facilitator sees not only the forest by the trees (the room, and the people in it). They handle logistics including personal comfort (i.e. temperature, noise control) and ensure all the materials and supplies are available to everyone. They greet people and make them feel welcome. They reach out to the quiet, shy ones and yet are able to rein in the noisy, boisterous ones.
   2. Break out big groups, give them tasks
   3. Keeps the tone positive
   4. Establishes trust with the group
   5. Very visual large print nametags
   6. A good facilitator can size up the group and can adjust parts of the exercise to better fit their needs. A good facilitator is flexible enough to tailor the exercise on the fly.
   7. A good facilitator should also ‘know’ the participants to give people roles outside of their comfort zones.
3. Expect the Unexpected
   1. Anticipate that people will bring up things that are off-topic. Get them back on track. Navigate back to the issue(s) at hand
   2. Things may happen to derail your exercise whether real events or not.
   3. Don’t be afraid to go beyond what’s in front of you
4. Respect the Participants
   1. Keeps participants on track and ensures participation.
   2. Make sure the people attending are knowledgeable about the topic.
   3. Keep them on time, on agenda, and on task.
   4. Listen to their conversations and learn from their experiences.
   5. Don’t lead the responders; don’t assume you know what they are saying.
   6. Hosts the group process and diplomatically works through issues
5. Have fun
   1. This is a learning opportunity, and should not be threatening for anyone.
   2. Sense of Humor, don’t get to serious
   3. Don’t take anything personally.
   4. You never know what you might learn. So keep your eyes and ears OPEN and your mouth shut.
   5. Don’t sweat the detail; make sure they understand the bigger picture. They get the details in the functional/drills