



Communicating During a Disaster: Tabletop Exercise

Exercise Guidelines:

- Low stress, no-fault environment
- Varying viewpoints are expected
- Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of current plans and capabilities
- Decisions are not precedent setting

Exercise Objectives:

1. Identify **current tools** that your department uses to communicate with employees (normal day-to-day operations)
2. Identify **alternate tools or processes** that would be used during an emergency
3. Identify **who is responsible** for initiating communication to employees

Scenario

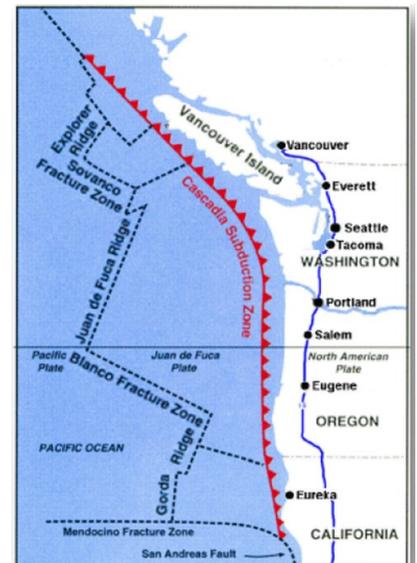
- At 3:05am on October 18, 2018 an 8.0 earthquake occurs along the Cascadia Subduction zone
- Shaking lasts for approximately 3 minutes

Impacts

140,000 square miles impacted and over 10 million people reside in the impact zone

Causes widespread damage to critical infrastructure

- Liquefaction: extensive damage to built environment
- Ground Deformation: impact to roads, bridges, pipelines, power lines & utility
- Landslides: damaging roads, bridges, railways
- Fires: broken water lines, staffing and equipment shortages



Objective 1: Identify current tools that your department uses to communicate with employees (normal day-to-day operations)

- Brainstorm as a group and list all of the current methods used to communicate with employees in your department (email, phone, radio, Alert Seattle, Yammer, Sharepoint, Skype for Business etc.)



Objective 2: Identify alternate tools or processes that would be used during an emergency

Discuss how departmental communication would occur after the earthquake and answer the following questions as a group:

- Outside of normal business hours, what methods would be used to communicate to employees about reporting to work, or to account for employees?
- Would this differ from your normal means of communication?
- What if your primary means of communication is not available?
- Do emergency contact lists exist? Are they accessible off site and during non-business hours?
- What would change if the event happened during normal business hours, for example at noon?

Objective 3: Identify who is responsible for communicating what information

Discuss who is responsible for different aspects of communication. Start by answering the following questions:

- Are there established protocols for reporting to work, or establishing communication with supervisors when an emergency occurs during non-business hours?
- How can employees expect to get information about whether or not they should report to work, or if work from home or other policies are in place?
- If a disaster occurs during non-work hours, who is responsible for accounting for employees whereabouts and well being? Is there an expectation that employees reach out to supervisors or vice versa?

NOTE: Some departments have essential employees that have direct roles in response and are expected to report to work immediately after certain types of events. Other employees may be deemed “non-essential” or not have a role that directly supports response or the department’s essential functions. Procedures for these employees may require the department to communicate instructions to them, or require them to call in or go to another resource for information.