

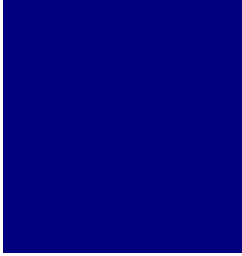
# Response Team, Assemble!

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Functional, Community-based Exercise  
Participant Manual  
September 17, 2024

## EXERCISE OVERVIEW

<b>Exercise Name</b>	<b>Response Team, Assemble!</b>
<b>Exercise Dates</b>	September 17, 2024, 1:00-4:00pm
<b>Scope</b>	This exercise is a Community-based Functional Exercise, planned for three hours at players' organizations and through a virtual platform. Exercise play is limited to the Metro Health & Medical Preparedness Coalition, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, group homes/ICF, home care, hospice, and clinics from across Minnesota.
<b>Mission Area(s)</b>	Mitigation, Response
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate the planning and response actions of healthcare organizations during a simulated significant winter weather event.</li> <li>2. Evaluate ability to conduct planning and response by implementing an Incident Management Team (IMT) or command center operation proactively, in advance of an incident happening.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate incident planning implementation of Healthcare Incident Command System (HICS) principles by following planning processes associated with by filling out the Incident Action Plan QuickStart Form.</li> </ol>
<b>Threat or Hazard</b>	72-hour winter weather event with ice, heavy snowfall, high winds, and freezing temperatures.
<b>Scenario</b>	The National Weather Service (NWS) has issued a winter weather advisory for the Upper Midwest and all of Minnesota. There is growing confidence this could become a significant winter storm with freezing rain, heavy snowfall, high winds, and ice.
<b>Sponsor</b>	Metro Health and Medical Preparedness Coalition - Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) grant.
<b>Participating Organizations</b>	350 nursing homes, assisted livings, clinics, group homes, home care and hospice agencies from across Minnesota will be participating in this exercise. The Metro Health & Medical Coalition will be facilitating and participating in the exercise.
<b>Point of Contact</b>	<p>Kenneth Combs II  Metro Health &amp; Medical Preparedness Coalition  <a href="mailto:Kenneth.combsii@hmed.org">Kenneth.combsii@hmed.org</a></p>



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## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Exercise Objectives

The following exercise objectives describe the expected outcomes for the exercise:

1. Evaluate the planning and response actions of healthcare organizations during a simulated significant winter weather event.
2. Evaluate ability to conduct planning and response by implementing an Incident Management Team (IMT) or command center operation proactively, in advance of an incident happening.
3. Demonstrate incident planning and implementation of Healthcare Incident Command System (HICS) principles by following planning processes associated with filling out the Incident Action Plan Quickstart Form.

### Participant Roles and Responsibilities

Groups of participants involved in the exercise, and their respective roles and responsibilities, are as follows:

- **Players.** Players are staff who have an active role in discussing or performing their regular roles and responsibilities during the exercise. Players discuss or initiate actions in response to the simulated emergency.
- **Observers.** Observers do not directly participate in the exercise. However, they may support the development of player responses to the situation during the discussion by asking relevant questions or providing subject matter expertise.
- **Facilitators.** Facilitators provide situation updates and moderate discussions. They also provide additional information or resolve questions as required.
- **Evaluators.** Evaluators are assigned to observe and document certain objectives during the exercise. Their primary role is to document player discussions, including how and if those discussions conform to plans, policies, and procedures.

### Exercise Structure

This exercise will be a multimedia, facilitated exercise. Players will participate in three modules. Each module begins with an update that summarizes key events occurring within that time period. After the updates, participants review the situation and engage in group discussions of appropriate mitigation and response issues.

### Exercise Guidelines

- This exercise will be held in an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
- Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (i.e., you may use only existing assets) and insights derived from your training.



- Decisions are not precedent setting and may not reflect your organization's final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions.
- Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve mitigation and response efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus.

## Exercise Assumptions and Artificialities

In any exercise, assumptions and artificialities may be necessary to complete play in the time allotted and/or account for logistical limitations. Exercise participants should accept that assumptions and artificialities are inherent in any exercise and should not allow these considerations to negatively impact their participation. During this exercise, the following apply:

- The exercise is conducted in a no-fault learning environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated.
- The exercise scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented.
- All players receive information at the same time.
- All players will be experiencing the same simulated weather patterns and road closures, no matter their location.

## Exercise Evaluation

Evaluation of the exercise is based on the exercise objectives and expected actions, which are documented in Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs). Evaluators use EEGs to evaluate the exercise. Additionally, players will be asked to provide feedback during a hotwash. The EEG, coupled with observations and notes from the hotwash, will be used to evaluate the exercise and compile the After-Exercise Report.

# MODULE 1

**Tuesday, December 8, 2024: 8:00am**

Today is Tuesday, December 8 at 8:00am. There has been some early snowfall, but the temperature has been above freezing and there is thawing, but more winter weather is expected. The National Weather Service (NWS) has issued a winter weather advisory for the Upper Midwest and all of Minnesota. There is growing confidence that this could become a significant winter storm with freezing rain, heavy snowfall, high winds, and ice.

## Questions

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 1. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

## All Players

1. Begin reviewing your winter weather plans.
  - a. Would you activate your emergency plans at this point?
2. What communication or messaging is going out to staff?
  - a. How do you guide staff to keep up with road and weather conditions?
3. Are you pushing out any communication to medical and service partners that you contract with? If yes, what and to whom?
4. Assess the following supplies and systems in anticipation of a large winter storm:
  - a. Food
  - b. Medication
  - c. Other supplies
  - d. Utilities/Back-up power systems
  - e. What plans do you have to accommodate staff if they cannot travel to/from your facility?
5. Decide whether you would activate your response plan and team. If yes, discuss what an Incident Management Team might look like, who would be on it, and what roles would be assigned. Would this team be assembled virtually or on-site?

**Wednesday, December 9, 2024: 8:00am**

It's now Wednesday, December 9 at 8:00am. The NWS has upgraded the winter weather advisory to a winter storm warning with a severe winter weather statement, effective until Saturday morning at 8:00am. Confidence is now extremely high that this will be a slow-moving storm with a heavy amount of snow, ice, and possible blizzard force winds. The storm has already started in North and South Dakota with significant impacts. The storm is forecasted to arrive within the next 12 hours. The temperature is 31 degrees and dropping.

**Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, Group Homes/ICF, Inpatient Hospice**

1. What additional steps do you take to ensure readiness for an extended winter event?
2. What plans are you implementing if staff have to stay overnight at the facility? What are your plans and messaging for visitors?
3. How will you manage these multiple objectives?
4. Begin filling out the Incident Action Plan Quick Start Form.
5. Access MNTrac Coordination room and review posted communications (if you do not have a MNTrac account, skip this step).

**Home Care, Outpatient Hospice**

1. What is your messaging to staff in the field regarding winter weather safety?
2. What is your messaging to clients regarding preparing for the incoming storm, especially those using electricity dependent equipment?
3. What are the plans for and communications to home office staff regarding the incoming weather?
4. Would you begin filling out the Incident Action Plan Quick Start Form?
5. Access MNTrac Coordination room and review posted communications (if you do not have a MNTrac account, skip this step).

**Clinics**

1. What are your thresholds for facility closure?
2. Who makes this decision?
3. Do you have established criteria for this decision?
4. Would you begin filling out the Incident Action Plan Quick Start Form?

## MODULE 2

**Wednesday, December 9, 2024: 9:00pm**

Snow is falling about an inch per hour. There are reports of ice accumulating on trees and power lines. There are reports of roads closed and power outages in the Dakotas. The National Weather Service (NWS) is reporting that the storm has settled over the area and is still moving very slowly from the west.

### Questions

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 2. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

### **Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, Group Homes/ICF, Inpatient Hospice**

1. What are your plans if shelter-in-place becomes necessary?
2. Re-assess your supply needs in anticipation of a prolonged winter weather event:
  - a. Food
  - b. Water
  - c. Medications
  - d. Other supply needs
3. Assess your staffing levels. Discuss any concerns about:
  - a. Staff being able to get in for upcoming shifts due to impassable roads or school closures.
  - b. Rotating staff in your Incident Management Team.
  - c. How are staff tracking weather and road reports?
4. Discuss any equipment, utility, power or heat concerns.
  - a. What are your back-up power plans?
5. Complete the Incident Action Plan (IAP) Quick Start Form.

### **Home Health/ Outpatient Hospice**

1. How do you know if staff are safe in the field?
  - a. How are staff tracking weather and road reports?



2. What are the plans for tracking on and off duty staff in the field?
3. What is your plan if you can't connect with staff in the field to verify they are safe?
4. How do you decide when it's unsafe for staff to travel for client visits? Who decides?
5. What is your communication to clients regarding the upcoming winter weather?
  - a. How is the messaging delivered?
6. What is your communication to staff and patients about continuation of in-home care and if it might be paused due to the storm?
7. What is your plan if your home office loses power?
8. Complete the Incident Action Plan (IAP) Quick Start Form.

## Clinics

1. How do you communicate to patients if clinics are open or closed?
2. Do you have a decision-making process if you need to consider closing a clinic due to the worsening weather?
3. When do you reschedule or redirect patients to a different facility?
4. How are staff tracking weather and road reports?
5. What are your Power Outage plans? Consider:
  - a. Plans for medications/vaccines that need to be refrigerated.
  - b. Other concerns associated with power outage.
6. If you are open, how are you managing snow removal?
7. Complete the Incident Action Plan (IAP) Quick Start Form.

## MODULE 3

**Thursday, December 10, 2024: 6:00am**

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) has issued an emergency alert that major roads and highways are closed in all Minnesota counties due to extremely unsafe blizzard and road conditions. Snow is still falling, and the temperature is 17 degrees. Weather is slowly beginning to move out of the area, but snow is projected to fall for at least the next four hours.

### Questions

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 3. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

### **Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, Group Homes/ICF, Inpatient Hospice**

1. Are you rotating Incident Management Team staff? How?
2. With this scenario update, re-assess and plan for the following:
  - a. Staffing
  - b. Supplies
  - c. Medications for patients:
    - i. Those the facility provides to residents.
    - ii. Those residents provide for themselves.
3. What objectives are you focusing on at this point?
4. How do you know when vendors will deliver supplies/medications/etc again?
5. Who is handling questions/calls from concerned families and loved ones?
6. What if a resident is in medical distress and needs to be transported to the hospital?
7. Complete second Incident Action Plan Quick Start Form for new time period.

## Home Health/Outpatient Hospice

1. Several clients have called in saying they have lost power. They rely on electricity dependent medical equipment. What is your role and process to assist?
2. What if a client is in medical distress and needs to be transported to the hospital? What is your role and do you have a procedure to assist?
3. How do you communicate to clients and staff about a no travel order and operational plans for the day?
4. What are plans when the no travel order is lifted- how do you assess safety of staff to begin client visits again?
5. Complete second Incident Action Plan Quick Start Form for new time period.

## Clinics

1. Who is handling communication with patients, both outbound and incoming calls?
2. What are your procedures for reopening your facility?
  - a. What are the criteria for re-opening safely? Who decides?
3. How is reopening communicated to staff and patients?
4. Complete second Incident Action Plan Quick Start Form for new time period.

## APPENDIX A: EXERCISE SCHEDULE

Time	Activity
<b>Sept 17, 2024</b>	
1:00	Welcome and Opening Remarks
1:10	Module 1: Scenario Update, Discussion Questions
1:45	Rejoin Large Group
2:00	Module 2: Scenario Update, Discussion Questions
2:30	Rejoin Large Group
2:45	Module 3: Scenario Update, Discussion Questions
3:15	Rejoin Large Group
3:30	Hot Wash
3:50	Closing Comments and Final Action Items