



FEMA Continuity of Operations Prolonged Power Outage Workshop #2

Quick Look Report

March 29, 2018



FEMA

Continuity of Operations Prolonged Power Outage Workshop Series Quick Look Report

Purpose: This *Quick Look Report* provides a brief summary of the Continuity of Operations (COOP) Prolonged Power Outage Workshop conducted on March 29, 2018 at the John W. McCormack Building in Boston, MA. The purpose of the workshop was to focus on the abilities of local, state, and federal agencies, as well as private sector entities, to consider their essential functions during a continuity of operations plan implementation. The goal was for participants to demonstrate how they will continue to provide their essential functions during a prolonged power outage due to an extended disruption to the electric power grid. For the local, state, and private sector agencies, essential functions were to be discussed without federal support. Participants were encouraged to focus on recovery efforts rather than prevention.

The information used to develop this exercise was gathered from various power outage After Action Reports and a similar Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) tabletop exercise conducted previously.

While no operations-based exercises are planned for this initiative, individual departments and agencies are encouraged to progressively exercise continuity processes and procedures on an annual basis.

Event Overview: The format for this exercise complied with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). Scenarios and injects were provided to participants to enable interaction and promote collaborative information sharing among agency colleagues and partner organizations.

The focus of a workshop is to develop a product. This was the second workshop in a series of five. The desired product, at the conclusion of the workshop series, is a *Best Practices Guide for Continuity of Operations* for stakeholders.

Objectives: The exercise planning team selected objectives that focused primarily on the continuation of essential functions, interagency coordination and communication, and validation of agency plans and procedures. The specific exercise objectives are listed below:

- 1) Review, update and revise current continuity plans when faced with a prolonged power outage affecting the jurisdiction prior to the restoration of power.
 - Core capability: Planning
- 2) Facilitate active learning opportunities and peer-to-peer exchanges, highlighting beneficial redundancies and identifying potential gaps in long term continuity plans.
 - Core capability: Operational Coordination
- 3) Determine how information will be shared and gathered based on current plans.
 - Core capability: Operational Communications

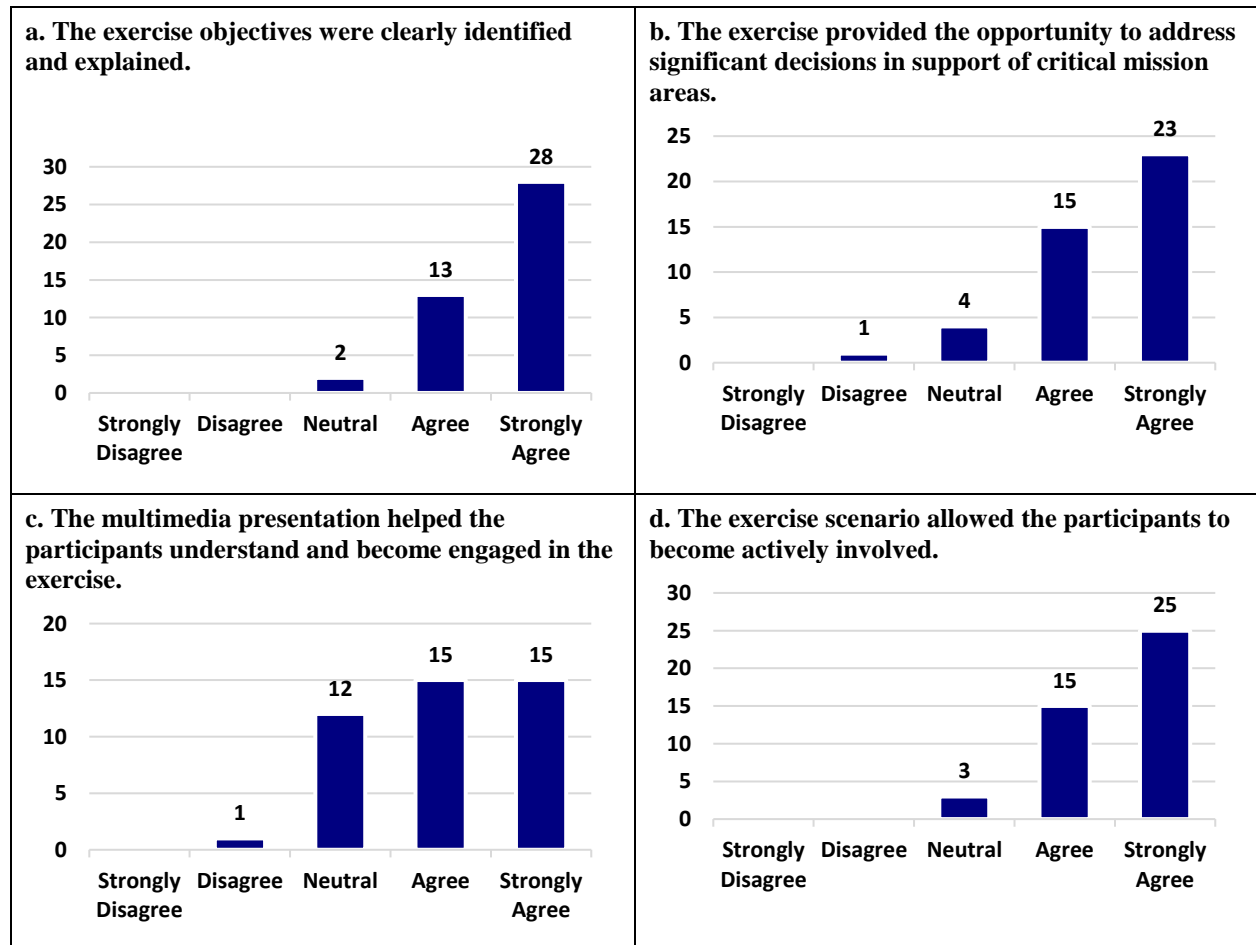
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- 4) Contribute to the development of a “best practices” report to support all partner agencies in the advancement of long-term continuity planning.
- Core capability: Planning

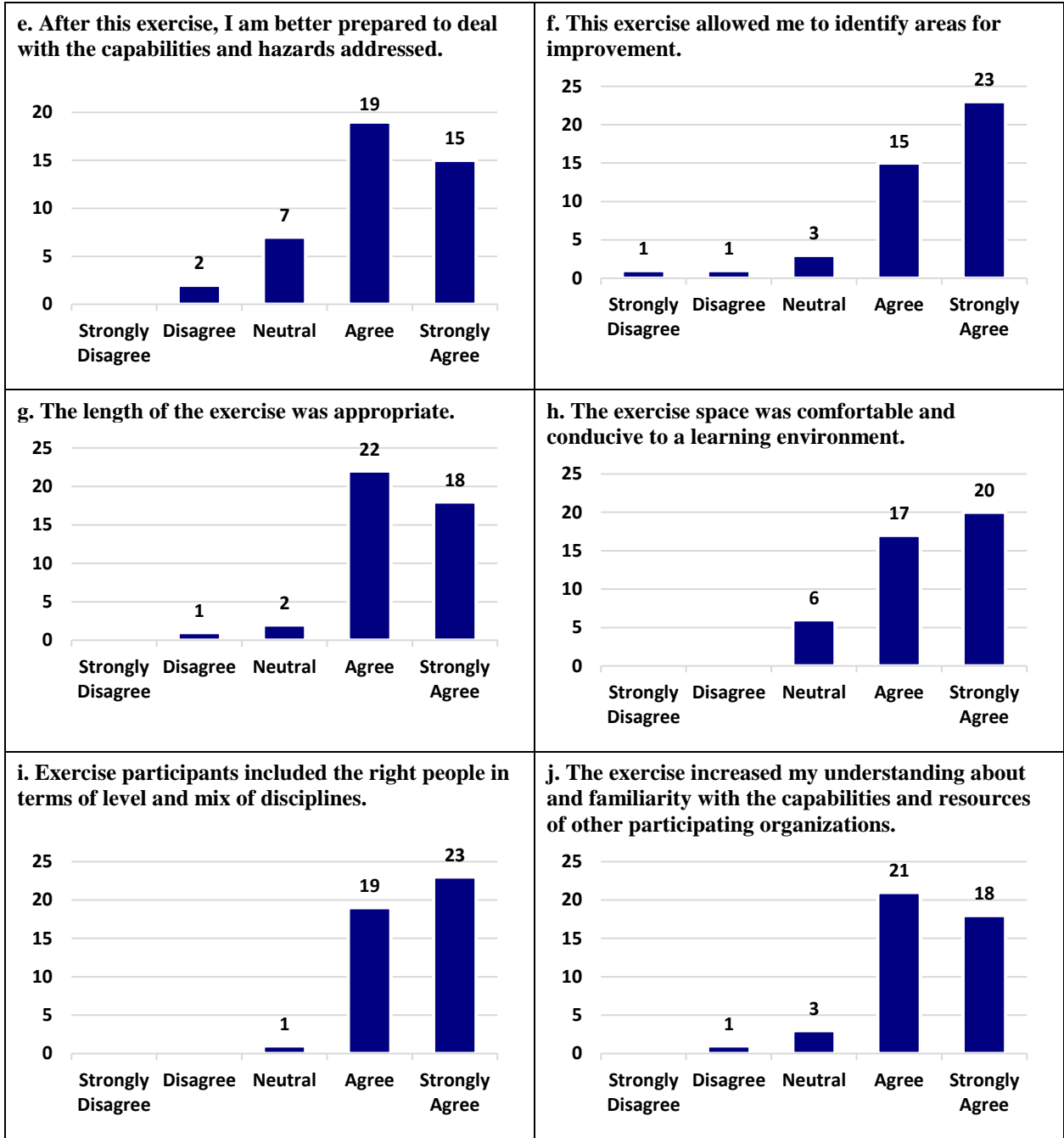
This exercise provided participants with an opportunity to review the *Ten Elements of a Viable Continuity Capability* and assess how the elements currently apply to their agency’s Continuity Plan. The elements are listed below:

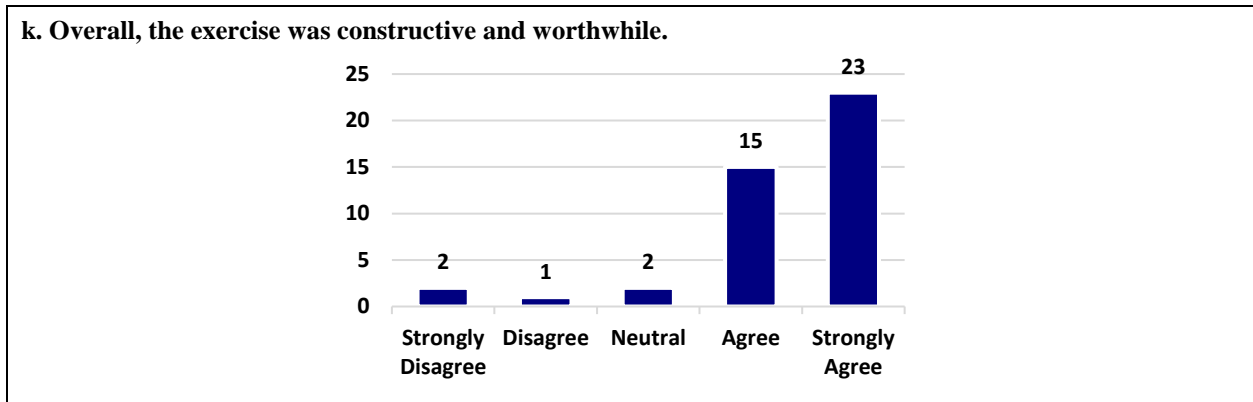
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| 1. Essential Functions | 2. Orders of Succession |
| 3. Delegations of Authority | 4. Continuity Facilities |
| 5. Continuity Communications | 6. Essential Records Management |
| 7. Human Resources | 8. Test, Training, and Exercises |
| 9. Devolution of Control | 10. Reconstitution |

Preliminary Findings: The following preliminary findings offer a quick look summary of initial data and key issues emergent from the FEMA COOP Workshop. A total of 43 Participant Feedback Forms were completed and analyzed following the exercise. Participants included government, public safety agencies, military, private sector affiliates, representatives from FEMA, and emergency management Merchant Marine student evaluators.



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Key Discoveries:

- Although a plan may exist, it needs to be regularly tested and evaluated. A communications plan should be included in the COOP plan.
- Must have accountability for staff. Employee pay, and work schedule flexibilities should be included in the planning process.
- Major retailers either have or maintain a database outside the region. Authorizations and decisions start at the lowest level and are filtered up, but if communications are limited, decisions are made by key leaders.
- Gas/fuel, generators, and dry ice would be essential to initially maintain products.
- Businesses could start relying on The Corporate Emergency Access System (CEAS).
- The exercise allowed for gaps in current plans to be identified.
- Employees could go to backup facility (dedicated seats) with generator power or work from home. Leverage staff from other offices to help share workload.
- Distribution of “MiFi” devices to critical employees to maintain connectivity.
- The ability to temporarily share branch locations with other companies, beyond the affected area, will provide work sites for employees of companies directly affected by the outage.
- Communication with major customers and impact to customers getting access to accounts would be an issue. If data center is up and running, then issues for customers would be minimized.
- Non-essential vs. essential personnel and who would be required to work and under what conditions (essential functions of position and the organization). Create an understanding of standing orders—personnel should not wait to be told to do their job.
- Several organizations have detailed plans allowing for quick action and decision making.

Areas for Improvement:

- Identify private sector partners that can support recovery.
- Cyber-attacks and ransomware are major concerns. Many companies do not have a playbook for those kinds of attacks.

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- As an event occurs, personnel are contacted through phone, social media, etc. What is missing is coordination and collaboration with state and local emergency management representatives (i.e., ESF 12). Need periodic testing of communications systems. Include greater access to satellite phones in the event call capabilities are compromised.
- An external call notification system will allow people out of region to transmit communications, but the location of a conference bridge, hosted locally or externally, will contribute to effectiveness.
- Are IT personnel aware of critical functions and the necessary prioritization of IT needs?
- Perform audits on plans. Plans must include costs of reconstituting following emergencies.
- The need was identified for increased funding, upgraded communications equipment, increased training activities on communication methods for long term operations, and the procurement of additional resources for communicating during power outages.
- Participants expressed concerns about acquiring resources such as fuel, food, and water following an event because there is typically not enough focus on supply chain redundancy.
- Enlist the help of facility managers, IT, and security personnel to ensure building is ready to open back up for business; possibly stage repopulation.
- While the large portion of private sector participants was a real plus, a recommendation for future exercises would be the inclusion of a subject matter expert at each table to give the group an assessment on the extent that critical infrastructure has on secondary power sources and how many functions the secondary power typically covers.

Conclusion: Overall, the FEMA Region I COOP Prolonged Power Outage Workshop was a successful event, further validating New England’s training and exercise capabilities and dedication to improving resiliency. The exercise scenario was realistic and player roles were clearly understood; the right personnel were seemingly positioned in the right places with access to the right equipment and with an understanding of their essential functions. Participants liked the mix of public and private sector entities.

A number of participants reported that the exercise provoked meaningful conversations among participants, particularly on the possible effects of a cyber-attack on the electrical grid. The consensus was that the workshop was very well organized, and the information presented and shared was excellent.

Lessons learned from participant feedback will be further analyzed and areas of improvements addressed in the development of the remainder of the FEMA Region I & II COOP Workshop Series. The immediate course of action from this exercise is for participants to take the findings from this report and include them in your department or agency’s Corrective Action Program.

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