Elliptic MRC Thunder Tabletop Exercise

Situation Manual

[03/15/2023]

This Situation Manual (Sit-Man) provides exercise participants with all the necessary tools for their roles in the exercise. Some exercise material is intended for the exclusive use of exercise planners, facilitators, and evaluators, but players may view other materials that are necessary to their performance. All exercise participants may view the Sit-Man.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	**Elliptic MRC Thunder**
Exercise Dates	**03/15/2023**
Scope	Elliptic MRC Thunder is a tabletop exercise hosted by NACCHO and planned for MRC workshops. The purpose of this exercise is to assess, examine, validate, and demonstrate the ability of MRC units to prepare for, respond to and recover from a catastrophic hurricane that impacts their region.
Mission Area(s)	Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery
MRC Unit Factors for Success **PHEP Capabilities**	**MRC Unit Factors for Success** **5**. Develop Procedures for Volunteer Recruitment **6.** Develop and Implement Procedures for Volunteer Screening and Selection **7.** Develop a Volunteer Training Program **8**. Develop Policies and Procedures for Volunteer Utilization **11.** Develop and Implement Strategies for Risk Management **12**. Participate in Activities that Fulfill MRC Unit's Mission **PHEP** **15.** Volunteer Management
Objectives	**Module 1: Rapid/Pre-Deployment Phase** 1. Evaluate procedures and practices for recruiting and identifying the type and number of volunteers needed for the missions requested. 2. Assess procedures and practices used in screening, vetting, registering and selecting volunteers to support the mission request. 3. Evaluate current training plans to identify gaps and additional resource areas based on the response mission. 4. Explore potential areas of risks for the unit and evaluate the risk management plan. **Module 2: Deployment Phase**

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5. Evaluate processes to notify volunteers with the desired skills and quantity needed to support emergency activities, including communicating with volunteers during adverse events.
6. Assess procedures to organize, assemble and deploy volunteers that have the necessary credentials and skills consistent with community plans to ensure the effective utilization of MRC volunteers and resources in both emergency operations and non-emergency activities.
7. Assess systems used for tracking and managing volunteers as indicated by the incident and by relevant job functions.

Module 3: Post Deployment Phase

8. Evaluate processes and procedures to release and track volunteers following completion of service in emergency operations and missions.
9. Assess plans to support volunteer post-deployment including medical screening, stress and well-being assessments and when requested or indicated referral to medical and mental/behavioral health services.
10. Review process to conduct an after-action review (AAR) of appropriate activities, events and emergency operations.

Threat or Hazard	Natural-Climate Change-Hurricane.
Scenario	The National Hurricane Center (NHC) reported that after a week in warm open waters, tropical storm MRC is approximately 200 miles off the coast of the northeast region (ASPR Regions 1, 2, 3). The National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane watch for large portions of the northeast coast. Forecasters are already warning of the potential for this storm to become extremely powerful. Two days later, March 14, 2023, the storm strengthened, and the NHC issues a Hurricane Warning for the three regions. Currently a Category 5 hurricane, MRC continues to gain strength and is projected to make landfall within 72 hours. The governors in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York City, New York, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia have declared a state of emergency and have issued evacuation orders for significant portions of the region.
Sponsor	National Association of County & City Health Officials

Participating Organizations	MRC Units in ASPR Regions One, Two and Three
Point of Contact	**Lean Abdelaziz** Sr. Program Analyst – Preparedness/MRC National Association of County and City Health Officials

GENERAL INFORMATION

Exercise Objectives and Core Capabilities

The following exercise objectives in Table 1 describe the expected outcomes for the exercise. The objectives are linked to core capabilities, which are distinct critical elements necessary to achieve the specific mission area(s). The objectives and aligned MRC Factors for Success are guided by elected and appointed officials and selected by the Exercise Planning Team.

Exercise Objectives	MRC Unit Factors for Success	Phase/ Module
Evaluate procedures and practices for recruiting and identifying the type and number of volunteers needed for the missions requested.	**5**. Develop Procedures for Volunteer Recruitment	**Module 1: 1: Rapid/Pre-Deployment Phase**
Assess procedures and practices used in screening, vetting, registering and selecting volunteers to support the mission request.	6. Develop and Implement Procedures for Volunteer Screening and Selection	**Module 1: 1: Rapid/Pre-Deployment Phase**
Evaluate current training plans to identify gaps and additional resource areas based on the response mission.	**7.** Develop a Volunteer Training Program	**Module 1: 1: Rapid/Pre-Deployment Phase**
Explore potential areas of risks for the unit and evaluate the risk management plan.	11. Develop and Implement Strategies for Risk Management	**Module 1: 1: Rapid/Pre-Deployment Phase**
Evaluate processes to notify volunteers with the desired skills and quantity needed to support emergency activities, including communicating with volunteers during adverse events.	8. Develop Policies and Procedures for Volunteer Utilization	**Module 2: - Deployment Phase**

Exercise Objectives	MRC Unit Factors for Success	Phase/ Module
Assess procedures to organize, assemble and deploy volunteers that have the necessary credentials and skills consistent with community plans to ensure the effective utilization of MRC volunteers and resources in both emergency operations and non-emergency activities.	8. Develop Policies and Procedures for Volunteer Utilization 12. Participate in Activities that Fulfill MRC Unit's Mission	**Module 2: Deployment Phase**
Assess systems used for tracking and managing volunteers as indicated by the incident and by relevant job functions.	8. Develop Policies and Procedures for Volunteer Utilization	**Module 2: Deployment Phase**
Evaluate processes and procedures to release and track volunteers following completion of service in emergency operations and missions.	8.Develop Policies and Procedures for Volunteer Utilization	**Module 3: Post-Deployment Phase**
Assess plans to support volunteer post-deployment including medical screening, stress and well-being assessments and when requested or indicated referral to medical and mental/behavioral health services.	8. Develop Policies and Procedures for Volunteer Utilization 8. Develop and Implement Strategies for Risk Management	**Module 3: Post-Deployment Phase**
Review process to conduct an after-action review (AAR) of appropriate activities, events and emergency operations.	**12**. Participate in Activities that Fulfill MRC Unit's Mission	**Module 3: Post-Deployment Phase**

Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated Core Capabilities

Participant Roles and Responsibilities

The term *participant* encompasses many groups of people, not just those playing in the exercise. Groups of participants involved in the exercise, and their respective roles and responsibilities, are as follows:

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- **Players.** Players are personnel 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.

- **Facilitators.** Facilitators provide situation updates and moderate discussions. They also provide additional information or resolve questions as required.

Exercise Structure

This exercise will be a multimedia, facilitated exercise. Players will participate in the following 3 modules:

- **Module 1: Rapid/Pre-Deployment Phase**
- **Module 2: Deployment Phase**
- **Module 3: Post-Deployment Phase**

Each module begins with a multimedia update that summarizes key events occurring within that time period. After the updates, participants review the situation and engage in functional group discussions of appropriate prevention, response or recovery 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 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.

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Exercise Evaluation

Players will be asked to participate in a hot wash to record the top three strengths and the top three items requiring improvement as observed during the exercise. The hotwash is an opportunity for players to voice their opinions on the exercise and their own performance while the events are still fresh in their minds. Takeaways from the hot wash will be used to evaluate and improve future MRC exercises

MODULE 1: RAPID/PRE-DEPLOYMENT PHASE

September 19, 2023: 11:30

- The National Hurricane Center reported that after a week in warm open waters, tropical storm MRC is approximately 200 miles off the coast of the Northeast (ASPR Regions 1, 2, 3). The National Hurricane Center (NHC) has issued a hurricane watch for large portions of the northeast states including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Forecasters are already warning of the potential for this storm to become extremely powerful.

September 20, 2023: 12:15

- Twenty-four hours have passed, the storm has strengthened, and the NHC issues a Hurricane Warning for the region. Currently a Category 5 hurricane, MRC continues to gain strength and is projected to make landfall within 72 hours. The governors in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia have declared a state of emergency and have issued evacuation orders for significant portions of the coastal regions and inland flood zones.

Key Issues

- A Hurricane is daintified and moving toward the Northeast Region
- Determining response missions and roles for MRC volunteers.
- Preparing for a rapid deployment

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.

1) How and when is the decision made by the response agency to request volunteers to support the response missions?

2) What does your MRC unit need to obtain a complete picture of the situation?

3) What systems, policies or procedures do you have in place to assess the situation and the risks associated for volunteers' safety and health before fulfilling the requests?

4) How is the decision made to fulfil the requests coming from the response agency?

5) What response missions and roles can your MRC volunteers fulfil to support the community's needs during this disaster?

6) What information should be communicated to existing volunteers at this time? What is the messaging process and current message?

7) How will the unit recruit new volunteers to support the disaster?

8) What kind of procedures does your unit have for rapid volunteer screening and selection?

9) What training is needed to prepare volunteers for rapid deployment?

10) What policy do you have to make sure volunteers have all necessary safety and health measures to reduce volunteer's safety and health risks?

11) How is the MRC unit managing or supporting spontaneous volunteers?

MODULE 2: DEPLOYMENT PHASE

September 22, 2023: 13:00

- With an estimated 24 hours until landfall, the path of the hurricane indicates landfall will likely be on the coasts of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, District of Columbia and Virginia.
- With expected high winds and severe river flooding as rain from the hurricane combined with storms will produce a total rainfall of up to 17 inches
- Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia declared a state of emergency
- Evacuation orders have been issued for coastal regions and inland flood zones.

September 23, 2023: 11:00

- The hurricane makes landfall as a Category 5 hurricane on the coast of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware. These areas experience significant storm surge.
- Rainfall and heavy winds are across the region, heavily impacting areas as far as Pennsylvania, District of Columbia and New Jersey.
- There is significant storm surge and flooding throughout Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Southern New Jersey and Southeastern Pennsylvania. Reports indicate widespread power loss across the region.

September 23, 2023: 21:00

- The hurricane moves northeast and returns to the ocean as a category 3 hurricane.
- Bands of high winds are still crossing Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania as the hurricane continues the path north.

September 25, 2023: 13:00

- After 24 hours sitting off the coast of New Jersey and New York the hurricane has regained wind speed and is again a Category 5 hurricane. The hurricane continues a northeast trajectory toward Rhode Island.

September 26, 2023: 12:00

- The Hurricane makes landfall for a 2nd time on the coast of Rhode Island.
- The hurricane continues its movement northeast through Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine.
- Heavy rainfall and high winds reach inland to Vermont and inland regions of the coastal states. Inland areas are experiencing high winds and rain leading to flooding and power outages.
- There is significant storm surge on the coasts of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine.

September 27, 2023: 10:00

- The storm has dissipated, and threats of flooding have subsided.
- Initial damage assessments are being conducted across the region. Initial reports of widespread flooding, wind damage, and power outages are reported.
- There are reports of coastal areas heavily impacted due to storm surge in Virginia, District of Columbia, Maryland, Delaware, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts and several areas due to flooding and wind damage in New Hampshire, Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Maine, New Jersey.

Key Issues & Implications

- The hurricane resulted in more than 1,000 fatalities and 5,000 people have sustained injuries requiring professional treatment.
- Tourists and residents in low-lying areas were ordered to evacuate 48 hours prior to projected landfall.
- Major portions of coastal cities are flooded.
- Shelters throughout the region are reaching capacity.
- Serious need for food supply and drinking water.
- Sewage treatment plants in the region have been flooded and sustained damage from the storm.
- Determining impacts on MRC volunteers to determine impacts on workforce.
- Allocating volunteers.

Potential Mission Areas Activated:

- Shelters Support for general, medical and animal shelters

- Medical Countermeasures/Immunizations (Points of Dispensing)

- Public Health Outreaches

- Vectors Control

- Food Safety

- Medical evacuation and transportation

- EOC/Call Centers

- Family Reunification Centers (FRC)

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.

12) What procedures or systems are used to utilize, manage and track volunteers?

13) What procedures does your unit have in place to organize, assemble and deploy volunteers?

14) Does your unit have just-in-time training, job action sheets or checklist in place to response to such missions?

15) What resources are most needed to support MRC volunteers responding rapidly?

16) How does your unit maintain consistent communication with stakeholders and the response agency throughout the disaster?

17) What system or forms of communication will be utilized to communicate with volunteers?

18) How are you communicating incident-specific safety and health risks to volunteers?

19) What system, policies or procedures do you have in place to monitor volunteers' safety and health during the incident response?

20) What type of volunteer legal protections are in place to activate?

MODULE 3: POST-DEPLOYMENT PHASE

October 6, 2023: 20:00

- Response has been ongoing for over 1 week and the immediate needs of the region are being addressed. The operation is beginning to transition to a recovery phase.

Key Issues:

Tracking volunteers' hours
Volunteer demobilization
Volunteer health and safety, including mental health
After action reviews

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.

21) What process do you have in place to release and demobilize volunteers?

22) What strategies for risk management are implemented to protect your unit and the MRC volunteers?

23) What system, policies or procedures do you have in place to monitor volunteers' safety and health after missions are completed?

24) How does your unit conduct after-action reviews and develop after-action reports and improvement plans?

APPENDIX A: EXERCISE SCHEDULE

Time	Activity
03/15/2023	
08:30-08:35	Welcome and Opening Remarks
08:35-09:35	Module 1: Briefing, Caucus Discussion
09:35-10:00	Brief-Back
10:00-10:10	Break
10:10-10:45	Module 2: Briefing, Caucus Discussion
10:45-11:00	Brief-Back
11:00-11:30	Module 3: Briefing, Caucus Discussion
11:30-11:45	Brief-Back
11:45-12:00	Hot Wash /Evaluation

APPENDIX D: ACRONYMS

Acronym	Term
NHC	National Hurricane Center
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps
SitMan	Situation Manual
ASPR	Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response
TTX	Tabletop Exercise
FRC	Family Reunification Center