

IASC Integrated L3 Health Emergency Exercise (H2E) 2017

- Participant Briefing Note

Exercise Background and Overview

An IASC Principals Health Emergency Exercise (H2E), focused on validating the newly established IASC system-wide activation procedures for an infectious disease event ¹ is scheduled for December 2017.

The exercise will take place between 29 November – 4 December 2017.

- The exercise will run in real time;
- It will involve IASC Principals, Emergency Directors and assigned staff from IASC agencies as participants;
- The scenario will be set within a fictitious country, within a real geographic region of Southeast Asia;
- The scenario background documents will be shared on Monday 27th November;
- ‘Real-time’ information, injects and responses to your requests will be sent to the nominated focal points in each organisation by email or phone call.
- The simulation will require staff to respond and act as they would in a real emergency from their normal duty stations. No staff travel will be required and your time commitment will vary according to your agency’s internal processes and the expected inter-agency consultation meetings (as per the protocol).

In this briefing note you will find:

- A. Exercise Ground Rules for the Activation Simulation**
- B. Information on the Activation Simulation debrief arrangements**

A. Ground Rules for Activation Simulation

The following information outlines the ground rules for participation in the Activation Simulation which are applicable to all agencies engaging in the exercise.

1. Objective

The primary objective of this exercise is to test the systems and procedures established by the Activation Protocol (link) as applicable at the headquarters level, following an official notification by the World Health Organization Director General (DG WHO) of a WHO verified and internally graded disease event.

Specific Objectives

- 1. Familiarize and validate** the inter-agency procedures for determining: a) the level of response; b) the most appropriate leadership model at country, regional and HQ level; c) the clusters to be activated; d) the overall in-country coordination mechanism; and e) the composition of surge capacity for such events.
- 2. Identify challenges and lessons** related to the ability to collect, share and assess relevant information on infectious disease events; to rapidly reach appropriate decisions on L3 declaration, leadership, clusters, coordination mechanism, surge capacity, resource requirements, common advocacy priorities, contingency planning for international spread and specific arrangements as applicable for the specific infectious disease and response environment.
- 3. Make recommendations** to strengthen the activation procedures and associated SOPs, to ensure a timely and appropriate response.

¹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/principals/documents-public/final-iasc-system-wide-level-3-l3-activation-procedures-infectious>

2. Timeframe

The simulation will commence at an unspecified time on Wednesday 29th November 2017 and end on 4th December 2017. The exercise will run in real time. The time commitment of individual participants will vary according to their normal role in an emergency. Participants will operate from normal duty stations and need to incorporate their emergency responsibilities into their 'regular' workload, just as they would in a real emergency.

3. Scenario

The simulation is set in a fictitious country, with a fictitious neighbouring country in South East Asia region. The scenario has been carefully researched with both background information on the country and the impact of the disaster derived from real sources and experiences.

While the scenario is realistic, replicating every aspect of a real disaster is far too complex and is not the objective of the exercise. Participants are asked to 'suspend disbelief' and actively engage in the scenario story as if it were real.

4. Information Gaps

Information gaps and contradictory messages are a reality of large-scale emergencies and have been built into the scenario. Participants are allowed to make any assumptions they need to make about realistic internal information to ensure meaningful participation in the exercise. This should only be done where absolutely essential and not have any substantive impact on the overall scenario or activities of other agencies.

Participants are not permitted to invent facts, information or messages to fill gaps or resolve issues – particularly with relation to any activity in-country and of other major actors.

To allow agencies to realistically assess their own in-country capacity, the name of two designated real *Reference Countries* will be provided at the start of the exercise. Participants may use these reference countries to supplement the information provided about the fictitious countries involved, for instance, basing their own agency's human resource availability or logistical needs on those of the reference countries.

IMPORTANT:

- If you have a question on the fictitious country, please contact Exercise Control (ExCon).
- If you want to know your agency's regional or in-country capacity, you may choose to contact your appropriate Regional Office or Country Office (at your discretion) - *please emphasize that this is a simulation exercise, summarize the situation and then ask for their suggestions on how the RO or CO would respond.*
- If in doubt, please contact the Exercise Control (ExCon) team (see below) for clarification or advice

5. Exercise Control Team (ExCon)

There will be two exercise control rooms - one based in Geneva and the other in New York. The two control teams are available 8am-5pm during the exercise in the two locations.

The exercise control team will send all the information (or "injects"), role-playing non-participants such as the resident coordinator, government, donors, press and others, and responding to your information requests and any questions you may have during the simulation.

The ExCon team is contactable on **H2Econtrol@gmail.com** and on the location specific phone numbers. *The contract numbers will be shared along with the agency focal point contact list just before the start of the exercise.*

6. Participation and Communication

Throughout the simulation, injects will be sent to participants in the form of emails, phone calls and links to news videos. Participants are expected to act on this information as they would in a real emergency. This may include information exchange emails, holding internal and inter-agency meetings, and briefing senior management.

As an inter-agency exercise, participants will be communicating between different organisations, which may have chosen to engage in the simulation in different ways. An *Exercise Focal Point* has been nominated for each IASC agency and a list of their names and contact details will be circulated prior to the exercise.

IMPORTANT: When contacting other agencies, participants should direct their communication to the relevant agency focal point (as per the exercise contact list).

If your normal emergency response activities include contact with agencies not listed on the Exercise Focal Point Contact List, you are free to make realistic assumptions about that contact provided this does not significantly influence the scenario or involve in-country actors.

If you decide to contact your Southeast Asia Regional Office or your country office in the designated reference countries, please ensure that communication is limited to only your operational response capacity. All internal communication and information request must clearly state that this is a “simulation exercise” and is not real.

IMPORTANT:

- All simulation related email communication must copy H2Erecord@gmail.com and must include the prefix “**SIMULATION**” in the subject line and in the message text.
- Please inform ExCon (H2Econtrol@gmail.com) of any inter-agency meetings or conference calls that are called as part of the simulation.
- **Please do not contact any agencies not listed on the Exercise Focal Point Contact List** (to be circulated at beginning of exercise).
- “**NO DUFF**” is the safe word to stop the simulation - due to a real emergency or as instructed by the control team.

B. Activation Simulation Debrief

Facilitated debriefs with those engaged in the exercise will capture observations and recommendations on the activation process for infectious disease events, and inform future training for organizations, responders and country staff. Two debriefs are scheduled as part of the Activation Simulation:

1. **Principals Debrief** – This will take place immediately following the Principals meeting on the health epidemic simulation on 04 December 2017. The Principals meeting is by invite only and is closed to observers.
2. **Working-level Debrief** – This debrief is for the Exercise Focal Point in each agency and other staff that were directly involved in the simulation. This Working-level Debrief will take place on Tuesday 05 December 2017 15:00 – 17:00 Geneva time. The debrief meeting will be held in Geneva with an audio bridge line available for those dialling in from other locations.