

Severe Weather Preparedness & Tabletop Exercises

Severe storms can cause dangerous traffic conditions, and further negatively impact general day-to-day operations. Being prepared for these challenges can minimize the impact. Leveraging Titan HST to send large-scale alerts across your organization helps keep people informed.

As with any emergency or crisis scenario, the ability to respond to severe weather appropriately depends on the training and tools that organizations have in place. Merely setting up a system to send an alert is rarely sufficient for managing a situation that can impact phone lines, internet, or electricity. Developing a severe weather preparedness plan should include knowing who to contact and what roles and tasks people need to complete before, during, and after a message is sent.

Using Mass Notification

A robust and reliable mass notification system can help manage the response after an initial message is sent. Features such as group phone and video calls, group texting, and targeted messaging brings team members together instantly to further manage emergency weather situations. Sending a simple mass broadcast message whether you're on site or not can keep your employees and team members informed of business closures, changes in scheduled shifts and other important, real-time updates.

Coordinate Drills Using the Titan HST System

Regular drills including all members of your team help to ensure that you will be able to communicate effectively in the event of a real emergency. This can be as simple as scheduling a monthly mass broadcast message. Starting drill messages with "THIS IS A DRILL" will avoid unnecessary confusion or misunderstanding. In addition, asking everyone to confirm receipt of your message will increase engagement and better prepare your entire organization for unexpected emergency situations.

Prepare Your Organization: Hold a Tabletop Discussion

A tabletop discussion is one of the best training tools to get your entire management team on the same page. If possible, gather everyone at one location, whether in-person or remotely, and facilitate a discussion about your organization's response to a disaster. The exercise leads your team through a simulated disaster scenario and prompts them to examine your organization's policies, procedures, and plans.

The goals for the discussion are:

1. To assess your organization's ability to respond using your current plans, policies, capabilities, and resources.
2. To help identify improvements that could make the difference in keeping your organization members safe and doors open after a disaster.

Exercise Overview:

Begin with a disaster scenario that is relevant to your environment or climate. Proceed with three scenarios to simulate an actual event. Include discussion questions that allow the team to focus on complex problem solving in a low-stress conversation. Remember, the exercise is testing the policy and procedures, not the team members. Take this as a time to identify problems and develop a plan to resolve them. Your goal is to improve the safety of your organization and bolster the continuity of operations.

End of Exercise:

At the end of the discussion, you should perform a debrief on the lessons learned and give each participant the ability to give their feedback. Generating an After-Action Report and loading it into the Titan HST "Documents & Materials" section will help improve your team's response to the next emergency or crisis in your organization.

Maintain Momentum Year-Round: More Ways to Prepare

Besides holding a preparedness discussion and a tabletop exercise for a winter storm, prepare and plan for other hazards you might face. The following resources can help keep your preparedness momentum moving all year long:

- The Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication training program draws from lessons learned during public health emergencies. It incorporates best practices from the fields of risk and crisis communication. For course materials, visit <http://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc>
- The National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS) are used by emergency managers to provide a standard vocabulary and process to manage emergencies. It is a valuable management tool for any organization. Free training is available online at <https://training.fema.gov/nims/>
- Practice the Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan of your business or organization, or visit www.fema.gov/continuity-operations to learn about the importance of having a continuity of operations plan.
- The American Red Cross Ready Rating program is a free, self-guided program designed to help businesses, organizations, and schools become better prepared for emergencies. Members complete a three-point self-assessment of their level of preparedness and have access to tools, tips, and best practices to improve their readiness level. Visit www.readyrating.org.
- A Workplace Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program can help prepare employees to help others before professional responders arrive. For more information on Workplace CERT, visit <https://www.ready.gov/cert>