



HOW-TO

## Tabletop exercises: Three sample scenarios

Six tips and three scenarios to get you started on a tabletop exercise

**By Sarah D. Scalet**

Senior Editor, CSO

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**A tabletop exercise** is a great way to get business continuity plans off the written page without the interruption of a full-scale drill. Rather than actually simulating a disaster, the crisis management group gathers for three hours to talk through a simulated disaster.

It can be a full-scale production that involves local first responders and professional moderators. Or it can be a simple affair conducted by in-house disaster planners. The idea is to have an escalating scenario that unfolds in several segments. After each segment, small working groups discuss how they would respond, then report back to each other before hearing from moderators about what happens next.

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### Tips for an Effective Tabletop

**Decide how much gloom and doom you want.** When planning a tabletop, Joe Flach, VP of Eagle RockAlliance, asks, "Do you want this to be a physical event with assets damaged and destroyed, or do you just want those things inaccessible? Do you want death and injuries, or just to test the ability to get work up and going someplace else?"

**Test how quickly you can pull together key players.** At public utility PSE&G, Director of Corporate Security Mike Paczynsky says the crisis management group doesn't always know when a tabletop will occur. Instead, the company

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