

**Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services**

# **After Action Report Improvement Plan**

# **VTTX Tornado**



**3/4/2016  
FINAL**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services participated in a Tornado Virtual Tabletop Exercise (VTTX) that is sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA), Emergency Management Institute (EMI) as one of a series of virtual exercises designed to bring numerous communities together in a collaborative environment.

The nearly four-hour, facilitator-led discussion touched the core capabilities of planning, public information and warning. This After Action/Improvement Plan summarizes the success of the exercise in meeting its goals.

Several strengths were noted in the County's understanding and performance of emergency procedures and roles. There were also several areas that could be improved based on the gaps, challenges, and recommended actions identified in the VTTX. These identified areas of improvement provided a basis of recommending a series of corrective actions or assignments in Appendix A. Improvement areas include. Actions included coordinated training, plan review, and outreach to external partners.

A list of workshop participants can be found in Appendix B.

## EXERCISE OVERVIEW

<b>Exercise Name</b>	<b>Virtual Tabletop Exercise (VTTX) - Tornado</b>
<b>Exercise Dates</b>	February 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2016 8:00 am – 1:00 pm
<b>Scope</b>	This discussion-based exercise was planned for four hours hosted by the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) and conducted with multiple remote Video Teleconference sites including Sacramento County.
<b>Mission Area(s)</b>	Mitigation, Response and Recovery
<b>Core Capabilities</b>	Planning
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist participants’ knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively conduct all-hazards emergency response and recovery.</li> <li>• Enable participants to better coordinate response operations with counterparts from Federal agencies, state governments, local governments, private sector organizations, and nongovernmental agencies.</li> <li>• Allow participating locations to share real-time tornado related preparation, response and recovery solutions with all participants.</li> </ul>
<b>Threat or Hazard</b>	Tornado
<b>Scenario</b>	The Tornado VTTX was designed around the realistic scenario of a tornado, which causes significant actions, by the participating jurisdictions and agencies.
<b>Sponsor</b>	Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services
<b>Grant</b>	No grant funds were allocated
<b>Participating Organizations</b>	A VTTX sign-in sheet is attached in Appendix B.
<b>Point of Contact</b>	Mary Jo Flynn, MS, CEM Emergency Operations Coordinator Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services <a href="mailto:flynnm@sacoes.org">flynnm@sacoes.org</a> (916) 874-4671 office (916) 508-5131 cell

## ANALYSIS OF CORE CAPABILITIES

Aligning exercise objectives and core capabilities provides a consistent taxonomy for evaluation that transcends individual exercises to support preparedness reporting and trend analysis. Table 1 includes the exercise objectives, aligned core capabilities, and performance ratings for each core capability as observed during the exercise and determined by the evaluation team.

Objective	Core Capability	Performance
Assist participants’ knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively conduct all-hazards emergency response and recovery.	Planning	<b>P</b>
Enable participants to better coordinate response operations with counterparts from Federal agencies, state governments, local governments, private sector organizations, and nongovernmental agencies.	Planning	<b>P</b>
Allow participating locations to share real-time tornado related preparation, response and recovery solutions with all participants	Planning	<b>P</b>
<p><b>Ratings Definitions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Performed without Challenges (P):</b> The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.</li> <li>• <b>Performed with Some Challenges (S):</b> The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws; however, opportunities to enhance effectiveness and/or efficiency were identified.</li> <li>• <b>Performed with Major Challenges (M):</b> The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s), but some or all of the following were observed: demonstrated performance had a negative impact on the performance of other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers; and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.</li> <li>• <b>Unable to be Performed (U):</b> The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were not performed in a manner that achieved the objective(s).</li> </ul>		

**Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance**

The following sections provide an overview of the performance related to each exercise objective and associated core capability, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

## Core Capability: Planning

### Objectives:

- Assist participants' knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively conduct all-hazards emergency response and recovery.
- Enable participants to better coordinate response operations with counterparts from federal agencies, state governments, local governments, private sector organizations, and nongovernmental agencies.
- Allow participating locations to share real-time tornado related preparation, response and recovery solutions with all participants.

The strengths and areas for improvement for each core capability aligned to this objective are described in this section.

### Strengths

The structure of the exercise focused on a multimedia, facilitated format for the national players as well as Sacramento County. Time was given to review each module and then answer discussion questions with guidance from the onsite moderator. Sacramento County participants discussed all of the questions internally and then provided an out brief of our top three considerations for each module rather than answering all of the questions to the vast group of participants in the interest of time. Our key strengths are highlighted and summarized below from each of the three modules.

Top three strengths

1. Participation in VTTX nationally was a good opportunity for Sacramento County to exercise with other agencies across the country.
2. The time frame for the VTTX worked well for personnel schedules in Sacramento County.
3. The VTTX identified the capabilities of our partners and department personnel to respond.

### Areas for Improvement

While the Tornado scenario is not totally realistic for Sacramento County especially at the scale described in the Sitman, Sacramento County participants altered the scenarios to fit their needs to ensure valuable learning for all and discussed the affects of an EF 2 Tornado, which was the largest recorded occurrence in California history. Additionally, southern Sacramento County had a recent tornado event in November 2015 and possible response actions associated with that event were evaluated for future severe weather events.

Top three areas for improvement

1. The Sacramento County iPAWS procedures need to be reviewed and shared with operational area participants for all to understand the capabilities of the systems in Sacramento County and the procedures for which those systems are activated and by whom.
2. Coordinated training amongst cities within the operational area should occur on a regular basis in this same VTTX format.

3. Coordinate OES (City and County) Media Day with local media for partnering and to strengthen public information coordination in a disaster.

**Analysis:**

Overall participants expressed satisfaction with the exercise and appreciated the opportunity to participate and look forward to more.

**Participant Survey**

Participants were asked to rank elements of the exercise on a five-point scale with 1 indicating strong disagreement with the statement and 5 indicating strong agreement. All participants (N=6) participated in the survey.

The exercise was well structured and organized	4.3
The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic	3.8
The facilitator(s) was knowledgeable about the material, kept the exercise on target, and was sensitive to group dynamics	4
The situation manual used during the exercise was a valuable tool throughout the exercise.	4.5
Participation in the exercise was appropriate for someone in my position	4.4
The participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines	4.7
As a result of this exercise, I learned new information that I will be able to implement in an actual event	4

What changes would you make to this exercise? Please provide any recommendations on how this exercise or future exercises could be improved or enhanced.

- To make the out-brief ore time efficient when calling out responding agency, identify the next agency on deck so they can be ready.
- Participants thought that groups should only emphasize a couple of priorities and not answer every question by topic area.

## APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This IP has been developed specifically for Sacramento County as a result of the Tornado VTTX. All corrective actions are entered into WebEOC for tracking over time.

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element <sup>1</sup>	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
Core Capability 1: Planning	iPAWS procedures review	Review who has the authority and responsibility to issue iPAWS warnings in Sacramento County	Planning	Sac OES	M.Flynn		
	Conduct Sacramento County VTTX	Hold regularly scheduled VTTX opportunities in Sacramento County for OA jurisdictions	Exercise	Sac OES	M. Flynn		
	OES Media Day	Host an Open House in the County EOC for local media	Training	Sac OES	M. Flynn		

<sup>1</sup> Capability Elements are: Planning, Organization, Equipment, Training, or Exercise.