



# **South Yorkshire FIRE & RESCUE**

## **EXERCISE BATTLE CREEK**

**Exercise date: 14<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

## **Debrief Report**

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## Introduction

After the success of Exercise Bravo Charlie 2016 and Exercise Broken Crown 2017 it was decided that another exercise of similar nature would be organised for Business Continuity Awareness Week (BCAW) 2018 which had the theme of 'working together to improve organisational resilience'.

The exercise took place during BCAW between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Exercise Battle Creek was a national exercise which was open to participation from any organisation that has access to Resilience Direct (RD).

The exercise ran throughout the week on RD with injects being released each day to progress the scenario. Each organisation could participate to whatever level their workload would allow.

The planning team and exercise control was run by two members to the South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Civil Protection Group department.

The information used to write this debrief report has been taken from observations from the exercise planning team during the exercise and the feedback requested after the exercise.

## Aim and Objectives

The aim of the exercise was to encourage partners to collaborate with each other to resolve Business Continuity disruptions.

The objectives of the exercise were:

- To test Business Continuity Plans within individual organisations.
- To enable participants to contribute to Business Continuity Awareness Week (14-18th May 2018).
- To encourage members to use the response pages within Resilience Direct.

## Participation

As previously mentioned the exercise was open to any organisation that has access to an RD account. There were over 500 users that had access to the Exercise Battle Creek pages on RD, however, it is difficult to state how many of these people actively participated or just observed the exercise.

A large range of organisations actively took part in the exercise and submitted agency reports including:

- Anglian Water
- Boston Borough Council
- British Red Cross
- Cadent Gas Ltd
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
- Essex County Council
- Food Standards Agency
- HM Coastguard

- Humberside Fire and Rescue Service
- Kirklees Council
- Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Lincolnshire County Council Public Health Division
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue
- Lincolnshire Internal Drainage Boards (Witham 4th IDB)
- Lincolnshire Police
- Met Police
- NHS England Central Midlands
- NHS Lincolnshire CCG
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Northern Powergrid
- Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue
- Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service
- Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Council
- South Holland District Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- South Tyneside Council
- South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue
- Warwickshire Fire and Rescue
- West Lindsey District Council
- Yorkshire Ambulance Service

Over the course of the week a total of 303 agency reports were submitted in response to the injects released.

## **Exercise Preparation**

Prior to the exercise the planning team decided upon a general scenario and then created twelve injects to progress the scenario throughout the week.

The exercise pages created on RD were in the 'response page' template. The exercise pages included an exercise homepage, a briefings pages (where all the injects were held), and a guidance page. Participants responded to injects by using the new 'agency report' template that had been released by RD a few weeks prior. The exercise planning team took this as a good opportunity to test the new agency report tool and for participants to practice using it (instructions on how to use the new agency report tool could be accessed in the guidance folder).

The exercise was advertised by various forums including though last year's pages, through Resilience Direct News on the Collaborate Home Page, and through the Business Continuity Institute website.

The week before the exercise began an email notification was sent out to all participants that released the exercise homepage which held the aim/objectives and the exercise format information.

Participants were informed that they would receive an email notification when an inject was released.

## Scenario

The scenario for Exercise Battle Creek was based on a power outage. Throughout the week twelve injects were released that progressively worsened the scenario/incident.

The feedback around the general theme of power outage for the scenario was positive, however there were several comments that the scenario *'escalated too quickly'* and felt a bit *'Armageddon style'*. One comment stated that the scenario had a lot *'crammed in'* and that a more *'scaled down'* approach with more questions and considerations might have been more effective.

In terms of the timings and amount of injects there was a mixed response. Some comments stated that the average of 3 injects a day was *'manageable'* and *'allowed for other workloads to be completed in conjunction with the exercise'*. However, some stated that there were *'too many injects'* and the late afternoon injects *'left little time to think and seek information before sending a response'*.

Several people have requested electronic copies of the injects as they would like to use them in house. This will be made available with the debrief report.

## Business Continuity Plans

The overall response to whether the exercise tested organisations business continuity plans was yes. Comments included:

- *'Tested our local and national BCPs'*
- *'Yes, especially the corporate BC Plan and confirmed the need for a committed Incident Management Group'*
- *'We are in the process of updating and amending our Business Continuity Plans and this exercise highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed within the process'*
- *'We have used the exercise to identify gaps and further work. It has highlighted areas that need further consideration as well as actions that need to be implemented across the organisation'*
- *'Yes – elements were tested and gaps were identified'*

The only constructive point around this area was one comment that stated they thought the first few injects tested plans effectively but when it becomes a national power outage *'subsequently no one department would still be referring to their plans. All decisions, actions would be made by management by means of an SCG.'*

## Use of Resilience Direct

Every organisation that submitted feedback stated that it was beneficial to run the exercise on Resilience Direct. Comments stated that *'it helps it to become embedded'*, *'always good to try and utilise RD as much as possible'*, and *'it also tested user capabilities on the website'*.

As previously stated the exercise utilised the new agency report tool to submit responses to injects. Players seemed to use the new agency reports with relative ease and no major problems were reported to exercise control. The feedback on the new agency reports was mostly positive with comments *stating that they were 'easy to use and complete', 'very user friendly', 'the guidance helped', and 'I liked the option of being able to check in the agency reports directly'.*

One player stated that *'too much jargon is used and caused confusion even with the guidance, the use of red/amber/green is open to opinion as not enough definition provided'*. Two other players stated that they thought the time box should allow you to record the *'actual time'* rather than in a 30 minute interval drop down box.

## **Suggestions for Improvement**

There were various comments around informing participants of the general theme of the exercise prior to starting. One player stated that this would promote a more *'partnership interactive approach'* and would allow more time to involve *'relevant in house participants'*. Another participant stated that *'whilst the surprise element meant BC plans were tested; we were unable to do any preparation work such as having an understanding what the power companies may do'*.