

EARTHQUAKE SCENARIO

_____ School is located _____. In addition to the principal, the school has ____ faculty members, ____ full-time counselors, a nurse, ____ secretaries, ____ cafeteria workers, and ____ custodians. On any given day, ____ parent volunteers are also in the building.

This morning at 9:45 a.m., your community was struck by a severe earthquake. The earthquake has caused extensive damage to a large part of the community. All utilities are out. The school is currently lit by emergency lighting only. The area around the school office appears to have sustained only minor damage. Damage to the remainder of the building is undetermined as yet, but one custodian has radioed that _____ has collapsed.

You know from experience to expect multiple aftershocks, some of which may be severe. You also know from attending meetings with local officials that, in the event of a severe quake, it could take up to 2 days before first responders reach the school. You must organize to help yourselves and protect the students.

Scenario Questions:

1. Draw your initial emergency organization, including personnel assigned to each position (by title), in the space below.

Focus on the rationale behind the groups' organization charts. Do not let the groups merely state that the organization is "in the school's emergency plan." Try to draw out the individuals' qualifications for the positions assigned.

Minimally, the groups' organization charts should include an Incident Commander, a Safety Officer, and Section Chiefs. Point out that it is better to keep the span of control small.

EARTHQUAKE SCENARIO (CONTINUED)

2. Where will you establish your Command Post for this incident?

Because you are unsure of the amount of damage and the risk of additional damage resulting from aftershocks, the Command Post should not be located inside the building. The groups should provide a specific location based on safety factors, proximity to the building, etc.

3. After establishing command, what will you do first? Why?

Size up the situation! Is everyone out of the building and out of harm's way? How many people have been injured? How seriously? What resources are available to help? What is the condition of the building? What else could go wrong if an aftershock occurs?

Responses of this nature are acceptable.

4. What is your first concern in this situation?

The groups' first concern should be the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and others on campus. Ensure that all who are able to evacuate do and that student accounting procedures are proceeding.

5. For what contingencies must you plan?

Aftershock is likely to be first on the groups' lists. Assuming that all who are ambulatory have been evacuated to a place that is at a safe distance from the building, other contingencies might include the possibility that:

- **There are multiple serious injuries and/or fatalities.**
- **The school's water supply has been disrupted.**
- **Parents begin arriving to pick up their children.**

EARTHQUAKE SCENARIO UPDATE #1

[Distribute this update 20 minutes into the exercise!]

The area has experienced several aftershocks of moderate intensity. The aftershocks have caused additional collapse in the gymnasium area.

Those who could evacuate the building have assembled in the designated area, and student accountability procedures are underway. The gymnasium has collapsed, and a class that was in the gymnasium at the time has not evacuated. There has been no communication with either the students or their teacher as of this point.

Several students were injured when they were struck by falling debris. One teacher was struck by flying glass and is seriously injured. A custodian has suffered what appears to be a heart attack. Several students who are asthmatic are reporting difficulty breathing, and the school nurse left the building without taking student medications. These injuries and illnesses are overwhelming the staff members who are assigned to the Medical Group.

There are no reports of fires as of yet.

The phone system is out because of the electricity interruption. You can see that a water main two blocks from the school has ruptured. Damage to the community that is visible from the campus looks severe.

Update #1 Questions:

1. How does this new information change your planning?

The groups now know that there have been injuries and that some may be severe. Additional personnel must be assigned to assist the Medical Group, and a system for triaging the victims should be established. If necessary, the Medical Group should be divided into a Triage Group and a Treatment Group to maintain an adequate span of control.

Given the fact that the gymnasium has collapsed, establishing search and rescue would be too dangerous for the rescuers. No search and rescue effort should be attempted at this time.

Proper deployment of resources may be another factor. What are the incident needs? Are there needs that are, as yet, unmet?

Water conservation is another factor. The groups know that there is a broken water main. Medical uses should be the first priority for the available water. Drinking should be the second priority. Hygiene uses are a much lower priority at this time.

EARTHQUAKE SCENARIO UPDATE #1 (CONTINUED)

2. Where will you locate the medical area?

The school plan should indicate a medical treatment area outside the building. If it does not, that is a “lesson learned” to be considered after this exercise. The medical treatment area should be located away from the damage, uphill and upwind from any possible airborne hazards, and in an area that affords privacy to the victims.

3. How will you communicate with first responders and others who need information about your situation?

Hopefully, the school plan includes redundant communications methods (e.g., radio or cellular communication). If not, this is another “lesson learned.” Point out, however, that emergency call traffic can be expected to be very heavy, so the schools may not be able to reach response agencies immediately. Communication with the media and with parents may be impossible at this time. Parents should know critical information about what to do in this situation, including what to do if the school is unable to notify them.

4. Given your current staffing, the amount of known damage, and your knowledge of your school and school plan, for what contingencies must you plan?

The groups’ responses to this question will be dependent on their local circumstances. Some contingencies that should be mentioned, however, include the possibility that:

- **There are (or will be) one or more fatalities.**
- **There will not be enough water to meet even minimal needs.**
- **Some children will need to be accommodated overnight.**

5. How does your school plan address provision for:

- Food?
- Blankets?
- Items to occupy the students?

Some considerations to include in the school plan are assigning the responsibilities of monitoring, maintaining, rationing, and disbursing food, water, and other supplies.

EARTHQUAKE SCENARIO UPDATE #2

[Distribute this handout 35 minutes into the exercise!]

It is getting late in the day, and aftershocks are continuing. A few parents have arrived but because of the obvious damage in some areas of the community, it is becoming apparent that at least some students will have to spend the night.

An aftershock has caused further collapse of the building, including the area designated as the pickup point for parent/student reunification. A few parents have arrived and are unsure about what to do. One of the parent's children is trapped in the gymnasium collapse.

The custodian has died as has one of the asthmatic students. The teacher who was injured is unconscious and has only a faint pulse. Also, there is still no word on the students and teacher who are in the collapsed gymnasium. Friends of the trapped students are crying.

The aftershocks have caused panic among the special education students who are not entirely aware of everything that is going on and why. Their teacher has sent an aide to the Command Post asking for assistance—quickly.

You have contacted the 9-1-1 dispatcher but all response personnel are currently deployed in other areas. The dispatcher is unsure when trained responders will arrive.

Update #2 Questions:

1. What will you do with the remains of the custodian and the student?

The remains of the deceased should be moved to an area where they will be out of sight from staff and students and covered completely with a blanket or tarp. A member of the staff should ensure that no one enters the area until professional help arrives.

2. What documentation does your school plan require in the case of these fatalities?

The groups' responses to this question will be dependent on their local situation.

3. How does your school plan address the potential liability issue in the case of the student death?

The groups' responses to this question will be based on advice gathered from legal counsel when the plan was developed. If the groups have no provision for addressing potential liability issues, suggest that they discuss the issue with their legal counsel.

EARTHQUAKE SCENARIO UPDATE #2 (CONTINUED)

4. How are you handling parent/student reunification?

The groups' responses to this question will be dependent on their local situation. Hopefully, the school plan includes an alternate site for parent/student reunification. If not, suggest that the groups record an alternate site as a "lesson learned."

5. What staff is available to help the special education teacher?

The groups' responses to this question will be dependent on their local situation. The Planning Section Chief should maintain a list of available staff. (If there is no Planning Section Chief assigned, this responsibility rests with the Incident Commander.) If no provision for maintaining the status of resources is included in the school plan, suggest that the groups record resource status as a "lesson learned."

6. Draw your organization chart as it looks at this time.

7. What should you do to calm the parent of the child in the gym?

Separate the parent from others where she can be calmed.

8. How will you handle the students and staff who must spend the night?

Keep the students in the assembly area and within their class structures but try to spread them out so that they can lie down. If blankets are available, distribute blankets to the students. Teachers should sleep in shifts, with one buddy always being awake throughout the night.

EARTHQUAKE SCENARIO UPDATE #2 (CONTINUED)

9. What will you do about nighttime staffing at the Command Post?

Assuming that the school's emergency plan includes lines of succession, the answer to this question should be predetermined. To allow the Incident Commander to rest, command should be transferred to the individual who is designated in the plan as next in the line of succession. When transferring command, the outgoing Incident Commander must ensure that the incoming Incident Commander receives a complete report of the situation status.

EARTHQUAKE SCENARIO UPDATE #3

[Distribute this handout 60 minutes into this exercise!]

It is now 3:15 a.m., and a several firefighters have walked up to the school. The fire captain is giving the firefighters directions and is approaching the Incident Command Post area.

Update #3 Questions:

1. What information will you provide to the fire captain during your transfer-of-command briefing?

The critical information to be provided to the fire captain includes:

- **The current situation, including damage to the building, the number of persons still unaccounted for and their probable location within the building, the number of injuries and their severity, the number of fatalities, and the location of the temporary morgue.**
- **The location of incident facilities, including the triage and treatment areas, the student assembly area, and parent/student reunification area.**
- **Resources that are currently available at the scene.**
- **Resource needs, especially food, water, and medical supplies.**
- **Personnel who have been assigned to critical activities.**

2. What is your role in the incident at this point?

The school's legal responsibilities for students and staff have not been assumed by the fire captain. The former Incident Commander should turn operational responsibilities over to the new Incident Commander (the fire captain) but should remain available to make decisions concerning the health and welfare of students and other school personnel.

3. What insights has participating in this exercise provided you about your school's or district's state of readiness for an emergency situation involving multiple casualties?

4. What revisions would you recommend for your emergency plan as a result of this exercise?