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Sand Table Exercises for Emergency Management Personnel

- The sand table exercise model starts with the creation of a realistic emergency scenario. A “sand table” is set up with small vehicles, buildings, roads and other features to create a visual image of the event that leads to a common operational picture. The participants are each assigned a role for managing the emergency, preferably the role that they would play in a real event, using the organization’s emergency plan and action guides/checklists as the guide to their responses. The participants evaluate the value of the plan as they talk through the management of the event.
- When the exercise is completed, the participants hold an after-action review that leads to a list of improvements that need to be made to the plan, to the training or to the action guides/checklists given to the people managing real events. This allows for continuous improvement in the emergency management enterprise.
- This exercise model has been used at the city, community and multi-jurisdiction levels for medical, terrorist, seismic and weather-related events. Adults learn best what they see, hear and experience. This model engages the participants in thinking but also in physically moving models around to simulate anticipated responses. This helps to embed the steps to emergency management in their minds.

Presentation Theme: Three-dimensional presentation of a problem enabling the development of a common operational picture for all participants, based on research and practice.

Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research: Frannie Edwards, MUP, PhD, CEM