

#### RELATED TERMS

- Emergency Operations Center
- Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan



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# LESSON LEARNED

#### PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Emergency Communications
- Emergency Management

## Exercise Design: Explaining Artificialities Prior to Exercises

### SUMMARY

Exercise planners should ensure that exercise artificialities are thoroughly explained and disseminated to participants prior to conducting exercises.

### DESCRIPTION

On October 9, 2006, the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico, Office of Emergency Management (OEM) staged the BallCom Full-Scale Exercise (FSE). The goal of the FSE was to evaluate the Greater Albuquerque Metro Planning Area's Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) by identifying areas for improvement. The FSE simulated the explosion of a propane storage tank and a large fire in Albuquerque's Balloon Fiesta Park. Representatives from ten federal, state, and local agencies participated in the FSE.

Exercise planners did not explain exercise artificialities to participants prior to the FSE. For the purposes of the exercise, the Albuquerque Police Department assigned a dispatcher to operate from within the inactive Emergency Operations Center (EOC) instead of the normal police dispatch center. When the dispatcher identified himself as "EOC Dispatch" over the radio, the incident commander (IC) erroneously believed that the EOC had been activated. As a result, the IC did not request activation of the EOC until the exercise controller and evaluator team prompted him to do so.

TICP evaluators determined that planners' failure to inform participants of exercise artificialities prevented participants from fully achieving TICP exercise objectives. Following the FSE, the City of Albuquerque OEM recommended that participants be informed of exercise artificialities prior to conducting exercises.

Exercise planners should ensure that exercise artificialities are thoroughly explained and disseminated to participants prior to conducting exercises.

### CITATION

City of Albuquerque, New Mexico, Office of Emergency Management. *BallCom Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan Full-Scale Exercise After-Action Report*. Nov 2006. [https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content\\_id=25896](https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=25896)

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