

## Considerations for Incorporating Your EP Kits into Disaster Exercises

### Before the Exercise

- If conducting training with the EP kits, remember that some items should NOT be opened in training (eg- Aqua Tabs Water Purification Tablets, Celox Hemostatic Gauze, and Emergency Trauma Dressing).
  - Be sure to communicate this to all participants in the exercise (before the exercise). If necessary, an Exercise CONTROLLER or EXERCISE SAFETY OFFICER could potentially remove these items from the EP kits just prior to the exercise, in order to prevent anyone from accidentally opening them. If this is done, don't forget to return the items to the kits after the exercise.
- "Exercise/training versions" of some of these items can be purchased commercially or can be improvised. These 'training' versions of the items could be placed into the EP kits just before the exercise in order to simulate the real versions of the items. Thus, your staff would still be able to practice using the items, without actually opening or contaminating the actual items in the EP kits meant for real disaster usage.
  - Regular, inexpensive gauze can be used as an exercise-version of Celox gauze (in order to preserve your very expensive Celox gauze in your EP kits)
  - There is a blue 'training-version' of the C.A.T. tourniquets that is useful for training or disaster exercises. These can be purchased online or could potentially be borrowed from members of your healthcare coalition, your EMA, and/or your local public-safety agencies (police, fire, EMS). The C.A.T. tourniquets provided in the EP kits should not be used for practice/exercises. Save them for usage in real emergencies.
    - The same groups mentioned above may also have Emergency Trauma Dressings or 'training-gauze' (to simulate hemostatic gauze such as Celox) that are usable (and re-usable) for exercise/training purposes
  - If you want your staff to practice training with the C.A.T. tourniquets (which is a good idea), then obtain or borrow some of the blue C.A.T. tourniquet training tourniquets. These can be used over and over for training/exercises.
  - If using tourniquets on real people in training/exercises, **do not** tighten the tourniquets to the point where they stop blood flow in the arm or leg. If you want your staff to be able to fully tighten the training tourniquets, then use a manikin, a fake tourniquet-trainer limb, or other inanimate object to tighten the tourniquet on (eg – a 12' length of cylindrical foam pool-float material that can simulate an arm or leg).
- If you want your staff to utilize the EP kits during a disaster exercise, be sure to tell them that the kits can be used in the exercise. The same applies if you do NOT want your staff to use the EP kits during a disaster exercise.
- Ensure that your EXERCISE SAFETY OFFICER is aware of any plans for or prohibitions against using the EP kits in a disaster exercise (from a 'rules' standpoint in the exercise planning). Include these messages in your written exercise documents and in written and verbal safety briefings.

### **During the Exercise**

- If practicing evacuations in a disaster exercise, the EP kits can be physically pulled from their storage locations and brought with the various groups of evacuating residents (or role-players) in the exercise.
- The EP kits do not need to necessarily even be opened, in order to be used in the exercise. In an exercise, if your staff has to think about using the EP kits, remember where the kits are, remember how to access the kits, actually go and physically grab the kits and assign them to a staff member (who then has to carry/roll/bring the kits with the evacuating residents). Even without opening the EP kits, this is still a solid and legitimate way to practice with the EP kits.
- This same way of incorporating the EP kits into a disaster exercise can be used if your staff members are practicing a shelter-in-place operation (the EP kits can still be accessed from their storage location, physically brought into the shelter location by your staff, etc.).
- EXERCISE SAFETY OFFICERS and EXERCISE CONTROLLERS in particular should be on the lookout for any unsafe conditions created by the exercise. The EP kits should be on their 'radar screen' as something to watch in an exercise. If EP kits are left unattended around LTC residents or exercise role-players, then this could constitute a safety hazard.
  - Remember that there are items inside the bags that could be unsafe for some people to have unsupervised access to (eg.- iodine Aqua Tabs, scissors, multi-tools, nylon cordage, electrical car jumpstarter...).
  - If a 36-pound EP kit is carelessly placed (unsecured) on the seat of a vehicle during an evacuation, it could fall onto a resident, potentially causing an injury.
  - If an exercise participant tries to use one of the items in the EP kit in an unsafe way, then it could lead to an injury (eg.- a staff member pulls out the NAR cloth litter/stretchers from the EP kit and then tries to use it to drag a live role-player or a live resident down a flight of stairs in the middle of an exercise).
- A common mistake in leading hands-on disaster exercises is failure to have enough competent EXERCISE SAFETY OFFICERS as well as competent ROLE-PLAYER WRANGLERS (role-player supervisors).
  - If your exercise is under-staffed, then you will not have enough eyes to catch unsafe situations as they develop. This is especially true when conducting multi-agency exercises involving multiple role-players.
  - If you are new to the world of planning disaster exercises, then you will likely need **more** EXERCISE SAFETY OFFICERS and ROLE-PLAYER WRANGLERS than you probably realize.

### **After the Exercise**

- Collect feedback from all staff members about their experiences in the exercise with regard to equipment/gear. Does any of their feedback relate to your EP kits?
  - Are there items in the kits that were particularly useful? Are there any items that were needed but aren't in the EP kits (that could be added)?
  - Did staff have difficulty in finding or utilizing items in the EP kits? Is more training needed for staff (about how to use the EP kit items)?
- These important pieces of feedback can be incorporated into your facility's written After-Action-Review (AAR) report and also into your Improvement Plan (IP) that should be created after disaster exercises.

- Has the disaster exercise shown you anything about your Emergency Preparedness plan that needs to be revised/added to, or otherwise changed?
  - This feedback can also be used to guide further Emergency Preparedness training class topics at your facility. If staff had trouble with using a particular item in the EP kit, then you can devote training time to the proper way to use that item at your next EP kit training class.
- Be sure to always remove the batteries from the flashlights/headlamps/lanterns before long-term storage of the lights (to avoid batteries leaking inside the lights). Don't deplete all of your EP kit batteries for disaster-exercise purposes unless you have additional batteries on hand to replace them.
  - If you remove batteries from the battery boxes, be sure that you arrange the remaining batteries in the box so that the contacts do not touch in a way that drains the power from them or might heat them up and cause a fire.
- You may need to use rubber bands, plastic bags, tape, or other materials to separate the batteries' contacts. Do not allow the batteries to get wet.
- Ensure that all EP kit items that were used in the exercise are still fully functional and that they have been cleaned, re-assembled, re-packaged as needed and returned to the EP kit bags. Ensure that the EP kits are returned to their proper storage locations after the exercise.
- Be sure to **document your disaster exercise thoroughly** in accordance with CMS Appendix Z requirements, in order to be able to show your surveyors if they should ask.