



The mock media are a crucial element of emergency preparedness training exercises. They are controllers who work for the exercise directors and simulate the real-world media. Their job is to test the emergency information response capabilities of participating

organizations by simulating broadcast and print news media. Their exercise assignment is to cover the “story” as if it were a real event by gathering information and producing real-time stories and social media posts on the basis of what they learn. This provides a valuable training experience for players by allowing them to respond in a controlled environment where those responses can be assessed.

About the Mock Media

Who Are Mock Media? The mock media consist of three components: 1) field reporters, videographers and photographers who represent media outlets that could quickly be on the scene and interact face-to-face with players; 2) reporters who represent local, regional, national and international media via phone calls to players from the exercise control center simulation cell (SIMCELL); and 3) off-site reporters who represent out-of-state media outlets via phone calls to players from remote locations. The mock media field teams wear badges clearly showing them as “Mock Media” and all phone calls are identified as “test exercise messages.”

The mock media reporters are former journalists and public affairs professionals with real-world experience in covering breaking news stories and in disseminating emergency public information. The knowledge and style of mock media reporters vary, just as would be the case with the real media. Differences depend upon individual interview styles; familiarity with the community; and the amount, consistency and timeliness of information provided by players. Through the nature of their questions and the content of their news stories, reporters will show players whether the information they are providing and their responses to inquiries are accurate, adequate, responsive, timely and understandable.

What Do Mock Media Do? All mock media reporters make inquiries on the basis of exercise play as it evolves. Mock media phone calls are also made from the SIMCELL on the basis of written injects prepared in advance by the trusted agents of participating organizations. The mock media begin making inquiries as soon as something occurs to alert them that an incident has happened, like the sounding of sirens or the receipt of an Emergency Alert System message. The field teams travel to locations such as decontamination sites, shelters, reception centers, hospitals, emergency operations centers, emergency management agency offices and the Joint Information Center to interact in person with players for information, video and photographs.

Throughout the exercise, mock media reporters produce real-time broadcast and print news stories and social media posts that are injected into play to let players know what the media would be telling the public about the emergency. When appropriate, the stories point out gaps, inconsistencies and confusion in information provided by the players. This gives players and organizations the opportunity to recognize the need for corrections, clarifications or additional information. The mock media never make up information, or intentionally include erroneous information in their stories unless the original source for the information is the players themselves. News conferences, briefings and on-camera interviews are typically broadcast live.

What Information Do Mock Media Use? During an exercise, the mock media use any information that is available to the public. While most inquiries pertain to the scenario, mock media reporters also ask about other relevant and related topics in the news, just as the real media would. For example, general terrorism and security concerns, effects of a hazardous materials release on the local environment, and historical site safety records would all be issues the mock media might draw from to ask questions in the context of the current event.

The mock media do not use information they may have as a result of their participation in the planning process, if that information is not known to the public. In making inquiries, the mock media only use phone numbers that are available to the public and/or the news media, unless special arrangements have been made ahead of time to use other phone numbers. During an exercise, mock media reporters will make inquiries using phone numbers that are not normally available to the public if those phone numbers have been provided by players during the course of exercise play.

Do Mock Media Know Scenario? The mock media try to limit their knowledge of the scenario in advance of an exercise. A mock media representative attends exercise planning meetings and works with the exercise directors and jurisdiction trusted agents to ensure the mock media will be able to realistically represent media coverage and reach as many field play locations as possible (within resource, travel and time restrictions). The representative also reviews the pre-scripted written injects to make sure they are realistic. Mock media leads for the SIMCELL and/or field teams attend pre-exercise meetings the week of the exercise to ensure coordination of last-minute changes. The other members of the mock media team are not aware of the scenario and the only information they use during the exercise is what they learn from players. Reporters use the information from players as the basis for the questions they ask and the stories they produce.

Interacting with the Mock Media

Do Mock Media Play In Front Of Real Media? Mock media do not interact with players or produce stories in front of the real media. This ensures that exercise activities remain in a controlled environment and do not become material for real media coverage. All parties involved in the exercise should cooperate and share information to avoid mock media activities in the presence of real media. To the extent possible, the mock media coordinate their field schedules with media escorts and controllers. If real media are at a location when mock media arrive or come to a location while mock media are present, a controller has primary responsibility for notifying the mock media. When the real media are present, the mock media will either wait for the reporters to leave or return to the location at a later time.

How Are Mock Media Contacted? Phone numbers for the mock media (in the SIMCELL and the field) are included in a player communications directory. During the exercise, reporters may provide additional phone numbers to

players for use in contacting the mock media. An e-mail address is provided for written news releases, media bulletins and other information that players would typically provide to the news media. If a player is unable to reach a particular reporter, the player should contact a mock media representative in the SIMCELL. The representative will get the information to the reporter.

How Are Mock Media Stories Disseminated? The Exercise News Network (ENN, a password-protected website located at www.exerciseneetwork.com) is used to post print and broadcast news stories (including video and audio clips) for access by players. Players should login at the start of the exercise and regularly monitor the site, responding to the mock media stories as they would respond to actual news stories in a real event. ENN also carries live interviews, briefings and news conferences. If a player has technical issues with ENN a mock media representative in the SIMCELL should be contacted.

How Is Social Media Simulated? Simulated social media posts are generated by the SIMCELL to reflect what the public and media would be saying on social media during an actual incident. These messages are disseminated during the exercise using real-world social media tools (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). The sites are set up in advance as “closed” groups so that only exercise participants are able to view and respond to the messages, allowing play to occur in a safe, controlled environment.

What Is Mock Media Post-Exercise Role? At the conclusion of the exercise, the mock media team provides observations and documentation to assist in the evaluation process, including timelines, accomplishments of note, recurring problems and examples of events that may signify trends. If players would like direct feedback from the mock media perspective about overall emergency public information play, arrangements can be made during the exercise planning process, with the concurrence of the exercise directors.

For more information, please contact:

Brett Hansard
Risk Communication and Management
Argonne National Laboratory
(818) 906-2745
bhansard@anl.gov
www.anl.gov/riskcomm



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A. U.S. Department of Energy
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