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# Virtual Tabletop Exercises

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# Agenda

- Homeland Security Management at UMUC
- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
- Virtual Tabletop Study Groups
- Traditional versus Online Tabletops

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# UMUC Homeland Security Management

- Master's degrees and graduate certificates
- Required specialization courses
  - Concepts in Homeland Security
  - Physical Security
  - Business Continuity: Disaster Recovery, Planning, and Response
  - Security Policy, Ethics, and the Legal Environment
  - Biosecurity and Bioterrorism
  - Energy Infrastructure Management
  - Seminar in Homeland Security (capstone)

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# HSMN Graduate Students

- Working adults
  - Active duty and retired military
  - Federal employees and contractors
  - State or local government public safety; healthcare
  - Miscellaneous other jobs
- Backgrounds / degrees pursued
  - Information technology
  - MBA
  - Law enforcement / criminal justice / emergency management
  - Professional sciences
  - Homeland security “wannabes”

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# HSMN 630 Course

- Business continuity + disaster recovery + emergency management
  - Topics
    - Risk management
    - Organizing, managing a program
    - Planning and preparation for disasters, emergencies
    - Training, exercises
    - Response, recovery, after-action reviews
    - Continuity, resilience
    - Legislative, regulatory aspects
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# HSMN 630 and HSEEP

- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
  - <http://hseep.dhs.gov>
- Standardized methodology
- Capabilities-based planning
  - Target capabilities and universal tasks
- Program, project levels
  - Program: assessments, strategy, multi-year plans, improvements
  - Project: individual exercises

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# HSEEP Exercises

- Treated as projects
  - Design, develop, conduct, evaluate
- Building-block approach
- Discussion-based exercises
  - Seminars, workshops, tabletops, games
- Operations-based exercises
  - Drills, functional exercises, full-scale exercises □

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# Tabletop Exercises

- Purposes
  - Assess plans, policies, procedures
  - Stimulate discussion of issues
- Suitable for any phase of a disaster
  - Prevention, response, recovery
- Formats
  - Plenary
  - Working groups - by function

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# HSMN 630 Virtual Tabletops

- Study group project
- Online e-classroom includes
  - Conferencing / discussion board
  - Collaborative document area
  - Chat room
  - Supplemented by student conference calls
- 5 weeks to complete the project
  - Creative thinking needed

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# HSMN 630 Tabletop Scenario

- F-2 tornado hits small town, late summer afternoon
- Light manufacturing company damaged
- Disaster phases
  - Initial response
  - Short-term recovery
  - Business resumption
  - After-action review

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# HSMN 630 Tabletop Role-Playing

- Group membership - 5 or 6 per group
  - Set up by faculty member
  - Ensure balance of job functions, experience levels
- Students role-play managers
  - Facilities
  - Manufacturing production
  - Administration (finance, human resources)
  - Information, communications technology
  - Sales, marketing, public relations
  - No executives!

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# HSMN 630 Tabletop Instructional Materials

- Templates for reports
  - Assumptions, decisions escalated, critical activities, resources
  - What went well, what didn't go well, improvement plan
- 360-evaluations
  - Evaluate group members + evaluate self
  - Participation, ideas contributed, work quality
- Grading criteria
  - 80% content contributed, 20% group evaluations

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# Traditional Tabletops

- Participants
  - + Network, socialize with other participants
  - + Have copies of plans, procedures
  - - Time constraints for discussion
  - - Away from work for a day
- Logistics
  - + or - Multiple facilitators for working groups
  - - Conference room, A/V, flipcharts, refreshments

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# Virtual Tabletops

- Participants
  - + Anywhere, anytime
  - + Time to research, think through issues
  - + Critique each other's inputs
  - - Dropouts
- Logistics
  - + Facilitate multiple groups
  - + Online environment to support threaded discussions, document posting, chat, other conferencing

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# Wish List for Study Group Tabletops

- At least 6 weeks for the project
- Submit reports by phase to executive (instructor)
  - Executive response could deny requests, change priorities
  - Injects would be true surprises — DBA stroke, lawsuits, loss of customers, falling stock price
- New scenarios
  - Public safety / emergency operations center
  - Cyber incident
  - Pandemic

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# Other Virtual Tabletop Observations

- Skill sets for roles
  - Sales/public relations; manufacturing
- Escalating decisions to management
  - Status reporting versus decisions
- Less or more conflicts than in person?
- Trouble staying within scenario constraints
- Katrina responder from military
  - That's how what I was doing fit into the bigger picture!

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If you are using a phone tree,  
you have an inconvenience, not a disaster.

-- Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Russell Honore