

Port of River City: Introduction

- Exercise Overview
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- Port Overview

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Port of River City: Introduction

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Overview:

- Each team will serve as the communications staff for the imaginary Port of River City.
- Teams will face a day of taxing events, which unfold rapidly, as a simulated crisis takes shape.

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Overview, continued:

- Those events, and their consequences, will come to you in the form of written inputs from your exercise work book.
 - Each team must develop a way to receive, evaluate and react to these inputs.
- This is a timed, two-hour exercise. The official timekeeper will signal when to turn the page and receive each new input.

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Learning Objectives:

- Learn the roles port communicators play during a crisis and the pressures they face.
- Learn how they depend on other port officials for crucial information and guidance.
- Learn how seamless cooperation between the press office and other port professionals helps ports respond effectively to a crisis and resume normal activity.

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Learning Objectives, continued

- **Discover/rediscover the wide range of audiences that must be considered in handling crisis communications.**
- **Learn first-hand the importance of being strategic, proactive and “on message.”**

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Learning Objectives, continued:

- Learn the importance of team work and information flow during a crisis.
- Learn communications decision-making in absence of complete details.
- Learn to blend strategic and tactical elements of successful crisis communications.

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As a Participant:

- **Your job is to determine how best to deal with the situation as it unfolds and fulfill your mission as the port's communications team.**
- **Think of this as a real crisis – place yourself in the crisis frame of mind; be proactive and achieve goals.**

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As a Participant, continued:

- The exercise will run until approximately 3:45 p.m. to be followed by a discussion of the exercise and crisis communications.
- Teams will have opportunities to assess their performance as well as the overall exercise.

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Rules of the Exercise:

- **As in a real crisis, the EOC – Emergency Operations Center – will be the final authority.**
 - Ben Zingman and Maureen Chan-Hefflin will act jointly as facilitators and serve as the Port Director and EOC/PIO, the primary point of contact for each team.
 - The EOC/PIO will have final decision authority.
 - All information that comes to you from the facilitators (as EOC/PIO or Port Director) is to be regarded as true and accurate.

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Rules of the Exercise, continued:

- You will have designated times to ask questions to the facilitator, but many questions either cannot or will not be answered, as in the real world.
 - Answers will be provided to all teams simultaneously.
- Questions for other port officials need to be directed to the facilitator as well.

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Crisis Plans:

- Assume the port has detailed crisis response plans as required by the Coast Guard and DHS.
- Assume the port has a crisis communications plan with:
 - Prepared media lists and other press information.
 - Background information about port and port businesses: jobs, companies, products, etc.
 - Contact information for emergency and management personnel from the port, stakeholders and emergency response organizations.

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Methodology:

- Teams should respond to the situation, act proactively, engage in communications or take other specific actions they determine necessary and appropriate.
- Teams make their own decisions about how to organize themselves and how to proceed in the drill.
 - Inputs from the workbook must be received and shared, without burdening one person; assignments may have to be divided to cope with conflicting demands.

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Methodology, continued:

- **All teams begin (and end) at the same time.**
- **All teams receive the same inputs at the same time from the work book.**
- **A time keeper will direct teams when to turn the page to the next input.**

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Inputs:

- **Information will come to you in the form of:**
 - News reports (actual breaking news stories).
 - Inquiries from journalists and other stakeholders.
 - Direct communications from the EOC/PIO and the Port Director and other port officials, including responses to questions.

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Responding to Inputs:

- Examine inputs for new information that advances the action:
 - Does the new info require a response or other activity by your team?
 - Can you anticipate additional inquiries or inputs?

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Responding to Inputs, continued:

- **Partial Checklist:**
 - Does a reporter need an answer right away?
 - How should requests for info be prioritized?
 - Did a news report contain a factual error or misstatement? Should it be corrected?
 - Do you need to contact the EOC/PIO, Director or other officials to obtain info or alert them to new situations?

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Responding to Inputs, continued:

- **Teams must decide how to respond:**
 - Reply, ignore or direct requests elsewhere.
 - Develop and distribute materials such as news releases, fact sheets.
 - Request action, support or new information from other port officials or external stakeholders.
 - Initiate briefings or news conferences.
 - And more!
- **Together, these responses are the team's "outputs."**

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Outputs:

- Teams will log all outputs (outbound activity) using log forms provided. Outputs may include:
 - Phone calls, e-mails or faxes whether responding to inquiries or seeking new information.
 - News releases and other written materials.
 - News activity (holding a briefing, for example).
 - Other actions and communications.

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Outputs:

- Record purpose of communication or action, to whom it was directed and key messages. No need to record full text.
- Logs will be reviewed during the post-drill discussion.

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We will be talking about Port of River City today. River City is a large, natural deep-water port on the eastern coast of a nonspecific country. Its primary functions are container, automobile and coal shipping and receiving.



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There is cruise ship as well as recreational boat traffic in the port and surrounding waters.



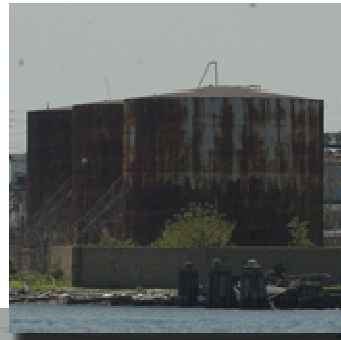
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As with many port areas in the country, there is a large commercial and residential presence in and around the Port of River City.



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**Both large scale
and light industry
are based on and
around the waters
of the port.**



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Some of the prominent businesses of the port area are Big Farm Products...



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the oil company Petro
Giant . . .



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and the Acme chemical production company, which manufactures toxic gaseous chemicals.



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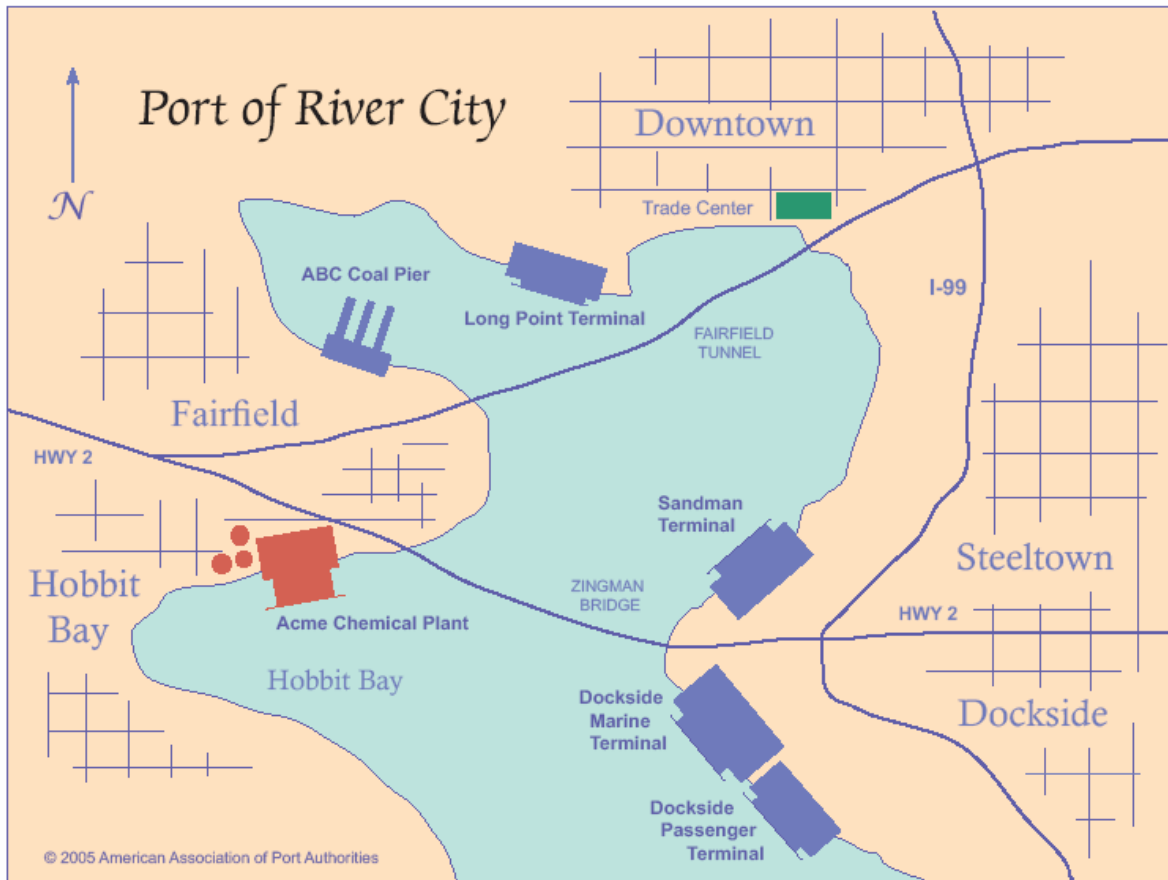
There are also numerous services on the waters, such as tugs, fire fighting equipment, the Coast Guard, and both city and port police.

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To summarize, the Port of River City is a large, thriving port that supports commercial, retail, industrial and residential activity as well as a successful tourism industry.



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Geographic Highlights:

- **Private Terminals: ABC Coal, Dockside Marine and Dockside Passenger**
- **Public Terminals: Long Point, Sandman**
- **Port Authority HQ: Trade Center**

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Criteria for Post-Exercise Evaluation of Teams:

1. Did we perform well *as a team*?
2. Were we strategic?
3. Did we develop a plan?
4. Did we adjust to changing circumstances?
5. Did we anticipate situations proactively?
6. Did we follow through and meet deadlines?
7. Were we accurate?
8. Did we have a positive impact?

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Final Notes:

- **All materials will be collected at the end of the exercise.**
- **Following the exercise, there will be a brief break and then a discussion of both the exercise and the lessons to take back to your ports.**