Agility Recovery

Lights Out: Responding to An Unexpected Power Outage

Overview

- **Facilitation Level:** Beginner

- **Duration:** 60-90 minutes

- **Format:** In-person or virtual

Section 1:
Exercise Overview

Exercise Overview

Objective:

- Test your team's ability to assess the scope and impact of a power outage

- Validate your internal and external communication processes

- Evaluate your backup power, data access, and remote work readiness

- Identify gaps in physical security, safety, and employee support procedures

Exercise Type:

- Discussion-based tabletop with escalating injects and guided prompts.

Exercise Overview

Scope:

- The scenario centers around a single facility impacted by a power outage. Can be adapted for organizations with multiple sites.

Participants:

- Operations, Facilities, HR, IT, Communications, Executive Leadership, and relevant department heads.

Scenario Setup

Read Aloud or Distribute:

At 11:04 AM on a Tuesday, a widespread power outage hits your region. Your office(s), local data

center, and several key customer sites lose power without warning.

Initial reports indicate this is part of a broader utility grid failure due to extreme heat. Estimated

restoration time is unknown, though local utilities are prioritizing hospitals and emergency services.

Key Details:
- Your main location has no backup generator (or: a generator that failed to start)
- Mobile devices and laptops have 20–40% battery remaining
- On-site staff includes 30% of your workforce
- Network connectivity is lost due to local ISP failure

Section 2:
Initial Response Discussion

Discussion Questions

1. **Who** is in charge of the immediate response?

2. **What** is your first communication—internally and externally?

3. **How** are decisions made with incomplete information (i.e. outage duration, safety risks)?

4. **What** systems are most vulnerable right now (e.g. servers, access control, refrigeration, patient data)?

5. **How** long can you operate under these conditions?

Section 3:
Escalation

Escalation: Injects, Complications, and Discussion

Inject:

Two hours later, the outage is confirmed to last at least 12–24 hours. Your executive team requests hourly updates. An important client is affected and demands assurance that service will not be interrupted.

Additional Complications:

- Internal weather alert system triggers a watch notification.

- Employees begin asking about work-from-home options.

- Local school districts announce early dismissal.

Discussion Prompts:

- How do you shift operations to backup systems, if available?

- What's your plan for re-routing work, rescheduling service, or relocating teams?

- How will you document actions and decisions for post-event review?

- How do you manage leadership expectations and client relationships?

Section 4:
Recovery

Recovery (Power Restoration)

- **Inject:**
  Power is restored after 16 hours. Systems come back online—but several have errors or data discrepancies. Your facilities team notes that two UPS systems failed and some equipment may be damaged.

- **Discussion Questions:**

- What does your restoration and testing process look like?

- Who is responsible for declaring recovery complete?

- What communications go out to staff, partners, and clients?

- How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your response and improve for next time?
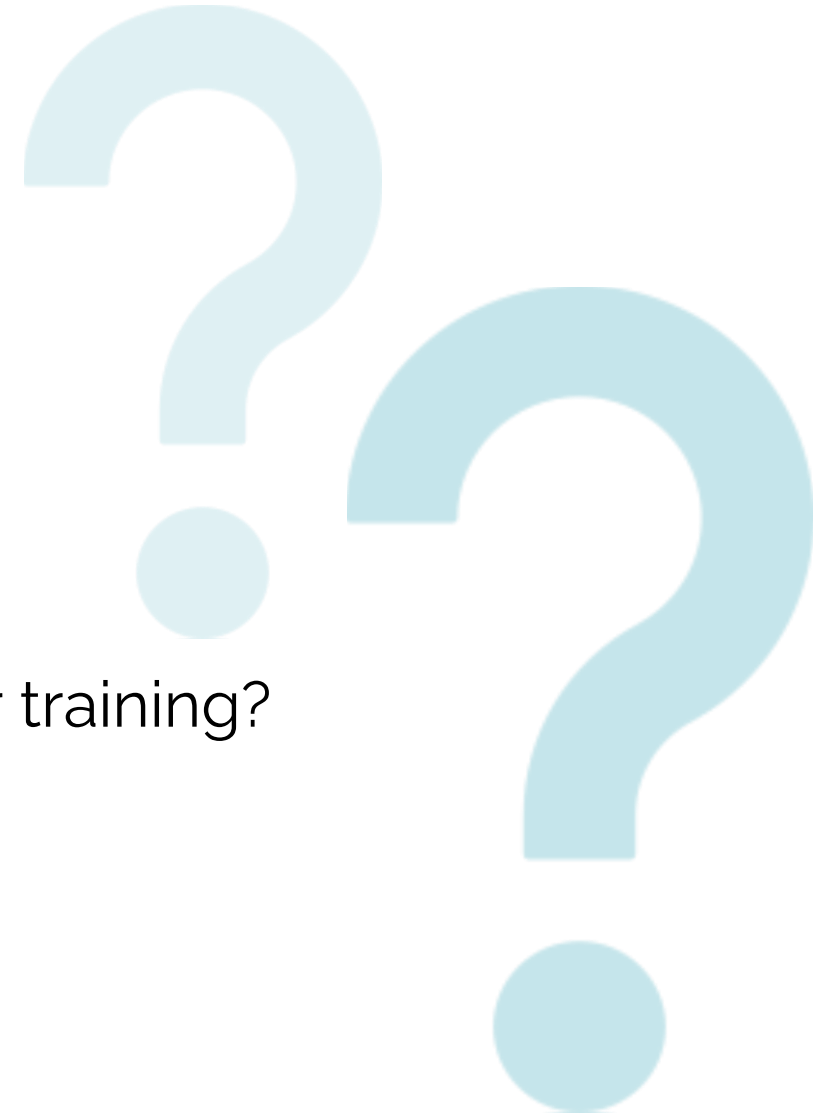
Section 5:
Wrap-Up & Debrief

Evaluation & Debrief

Facilitator leads discussion:

- What went well?

- What surprised you?

- What needs to change in your plan, systems, or training?
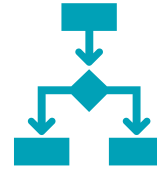
Section 6:
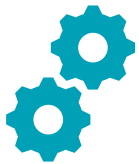## Next Steps

Where Do We Need to Improve?

Use this as a worksheet for action items identified throughout the exercise

Communications

Operations

Equipment & Facilities

Vendors & Support Needed

Agility Recovery

Next Steps

This beginner-level template offers a structured starting point, but many organizations benefit from third-party facilitation to uncover hidden gaps and strengthen response capabilities. Advanced exercises may include:

- Real-world roles
- Rotation of incident leadership, checklists for generator deployment or vendor escalation
- A simultaneous exercise with IT/cyber injects to simulate cascading impacts

Want expert support in your next exercise?

Schedule a custom tabletop exercise facilitated by Agility Recovery.