



Test the REAP Answer Sheet

Problems in the Plan Revealed by the Scenario

Day 1

- Jones has problems with the Phone Tree. No backups are listed for the eventuality in which one cannot reach a particular Action Team member. This may leave everyone stranded. It's obvious that DPR has never tested its plan in a mock emergency, because this shortcoming would have surfaced immediately.
- The Phone Tree is more of a stick—completely linear; therefore, it would take longer to work through than a branched “tree.”
- With no essential records identified and no priority recovery list, Jones has no idea which records to try to save first. If he gets as far as the Emergency Supply Cabinet, he is unlikely to find much there to help him.

Day 2

- Again, the lack of a holdings priority list leaves the Action Team without direction. Whether Flagg's decision to rescue her own office's records first turns out to be a good choice is irrelevant. What matters is that the REAP leaves a vacuum in which Flagg must make knee-jerk decisions.
- Flagg errs in rescuing the waterlogged records first, rather than those that are partially damp. She assumes that the “most damaged” are top priority. This is not true. Aside from priority due to a record's importance, first attention is given where the least investment will produce the greatest results. Considerable time is spent dragging these heavy boxes upstairs. They would not have been wetter had they waited longer. Nor will they dry significantly faster for their additional couple of hours out of standing water.
- If that same time had been spent time removing partially damp records and setting them up to dry, that could have had a significant impact on the records' chance of survival. The plan does not help Flagg make good choices.
- The plan gives no instructions in pack-out methods. It is no surprise that one box totally disintegrated. These boxes should either be repacked (in file order) into milk crates, or placed individually in garbage bags for freezing until drying choices can be made at leisure. How is the team to know this if the plan doesn't tell them?
- Faced with boxes dripping water, Flagg places them on the dock to drain. The plan does not mention security of records removed from DPR's direct custody. The plan does not instruct the team to document its work, so the pack-out has not identified what has been removed to where. When the boxes are thrown into the dumpster and interred in the trash compactor, will DPR know what is lost?
- The plan gives no practical advice on how to air dry records on site. No wonder Flagg can't give her staff useful direction.



Suggestions for Improving DPR's REAP

Page 4, Procedures

- There is no provision for moving or protecting records in present danger. This should be one of the first actions taken in the General Procedures. Much damage might be averted, for example, by covering records to protect them from dripping water, moving records out of range of a fire, or removing backup tapes from the endangered facility.
- It is a bad idea to call the media at this point (General Procedures, item 5). The media will find you plenty soon enough. Emergency is, by definition, negative publicity. Don't go looking for trouble! In addition, the plan does not make clear that only the Public Affairs person interfaces with the media.
- The First Response section should include instructions to contact agency officials and the media spokesperson. It would be really embarrassing if the head of the agency, assuming she or he is not on the Action Team, learned of the emergency from the 5 o'clock news.
- No provision is made to remove and stabilize priority items. This should occur in the Second Response. Time should not be wasted recovering old purchase orders while the ink slowly disappears from key program files.
- The Action Team must assemble (General Procedures, item 6) before anything else can be done. This may not be in DPR's best interests. At least the Building Manager could begin to assess the damage (see First Response section) while waiting for the rest of the Action Team to arrive.
- For all the touting of human safety first, this plan makes no mention of the asbestos hazard lurking above the drop ceiling. Is staff at risk if pipes leak and ceiling tiles fall down?

Page 5, Records Emergency Action Team

- No one person has overall responsibility for the records and for following the priority list in pack-out and recovery. (Perhaps this is why there is also no priority list on page 7 of the DPR REAP.) It does not take a great deal of imagination to envision three records people bickering about what has highest priority. One records custodian succeeded in moving her records to the top of the list by sheer force of personality. DPR believed that assigning three Action Team positions to records stressed the importance of records. But in a real emergency, shared responsibility muddies an effective response.
- Agency Records Officers must decide recovery priorities after the emergency has happened. A good REAP has carefully made these choices already. While some latitude must be given for assessing unique situations, there should be no general question during an emergency about which records to recover first.



- The Health and Safety Officer is responsible to establish evacuation procedures but is not tasked with conducting periodic evacuation drills. In fact, nobody is. If an emergency or incident happened during working hours, would staff safely escape the building?
- The Administrative Officer is required to carry the Agency credit card at all times. What if she or he is a casualty? The AO and one or two others should have credit card numbers at home.
- The Public Affairs person is inclined to skew the story to put DPR in a good light. This will hurt DPR in the long run. Accurate information should be released as promptly as possible. The slightest hint of cover-up will haunt DPR for years. Public Affairs has no responsibility in the Recovery phase. This position should continue as liaison with the media during all aspects of recovery.
- The Security Officer does not have responsibility for maintaining records identifying lockable portions of buildings, who has keys, and where master keys are kept. The Security Officer is not specifically charged with guarding security of records, particularly during transfer to and from off-site locations and while at an off-site location for drying, etc.

Page 7, Phone Tree

- Rebecca Hurst has been permitted to keep her unlisted telephone number a secret. This renders her useless if the emergency happens after hours. An unreasonable right to privacy must be set aside if the plan is to be effective.
- The plan was last updated in 1999, and some pages longer ago than that. Pen-and-ink changes provide incomplete information about the new Security Officer. The person who wrote down the phone number probably knew the area code, but did not enter it. All phone lists should include area codes. No cell phones are included on the phone list.
- Did you catch a subtle but very important shortfall? The Action Team Coordinator lives in Folkston, GA. He commutes 80 or 90 miles to work. He is too far away from the facility to be an effective Action Team Coordinator, as he simply cannot get there in time. (Although it did not happen at DPR, Directors commonly appoint themselves as Coordinators, believing that they must always be in charge. Not necessarily.)

Page 8, Holdings List

- A file plan per se is only marginally useful in a REAP. The plan does not identify essential records or prioritize holdings. It therefore fails to provide needed information.
- The holdings list covers all DPR files in one sequence arranged by file code number. Where are these files kept? According to the floor plan, files are in various offices. Even if there were a designation of essential records and priority of rescue, we would not know where to look for these records.



Page 9, Sources of Supply

- The emergency supply cabinet lacks many items, including milk crates, heavy-duty plastic bags, washing tubs, clotheslines and clothespins, Plexiglas™ sheets, etc. No supplier for these items is listed, either. About all the Response Team will be able to do with the supplies currently in the cabinet is walk around and look at things in the dark.
- It would be a good idea to have a copy of the REAP in the emergency supply cabinet.
- No commercial records recovery services are listed. In the event of a major emergency, the Response Team has to start from scratch to find suppliers and services. Would they even know where to look? This is a classic example of how planning ahead can save time and effort in crisis.
- One source of supply is already noted as being out of business. The manuscript note may keep you from making a useless call, but it doesn't help you find the supplies you need. It's time to research a new source of supply and substitute its name.
- This section includes one important point done correctly in the REAP. The team will naturally get hungry. The supply list includes a Chicago source for pizza because pizza is filling for hard-working emergency recovery folks, and we all know that the only really good pizza you can get comes from Chicago. However, the pizza will be cold before it arrives.

Page 10, Floor Plan

- The floor plan does not show all DPR space. Procurement and Grants Department is absent; is it on the third floor? One of the LAN file servers occupies a room carved out of General Counsel's space in 1997. This page was updated in 1999, yet it fails to show the LAN at all. Basement storage is not included. Do we know where in the basement records are stored?
- The floor plan is a fairly decent amateur effort. But its bird's-eye view assumes that recovery workers will be familiar with the building. For instance, "elevator/stairwell shaft" is shown as "dead" space for which DPR is not responsible. In a real emergency, a recovery worker could come up the stairs, arrive in the lobby, and not have a clue which of the four walls of that lobby he was facing. No doors are shown on the floor plan. One could not stand in the hallway, floor plan in hand, and figure out which door leads to which office.
- It is obvious that not all files are shown on the floor plan. Four offices record no files at all, including the General Counsel's office!!! An inventory needs to be made, and the floor plan updated accordingly. Indication of essential records' locations, and of those records that are high in recovery priority, would not be amiss.