Put your company name and logo here

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**Pandemic Response Tabletop Exercise**

**Player Handbook**

**Business Sensitive**

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# Handling Instructions

1. The title of this document is the *Pandemic Business Continuity Tabletop Exercise: Player Handbook.*
2. Information gathered in this document is designated as business sensitive and should be handled as sensitive information that is not to be disclosed.
3. For more information about the tabletop exercise (TTX), please consult the following point(s) of contact:

Name

Position

Contact information

# Section 1: Exercise Overview

## Background

To enhance ongoing COVID-19 response operations and to prepare for widespread contagion in parts or all of the United States, HHS/ASPR/Office of the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary/Exercises, Evaluations, and After Actions Division has developed a tabletop exercise for the private sector, including owners/operators, company legal counsel, communications teams, Human Resources, and other key company leadership.

## Exercise Objectives

* Discuss the role of company leadership in considering and making decisions on potential community mitigation measures.
* Discuss and determine what measures our company can/should implement to ensure business continuity and maintain a viable workforce during an outbreak.
* Discuss and determine how we will develop and adapt our crisis communication strategy as the outbreak evolves.
* Discuss and determine what policy changes may be necessary to support the response to the spread of an infectious disease.
* Discuss risks to our company supply chains and the means to mitigate those risks.

## Scenario

Due to the constantly changing situation with COVID-19, exercise designers have chosen to use a general pandemic as the basis for this exercise. This ensures that the information provided in this Player Handbook (and throughout the exercise) is current, and does not cause unwarranted assumptions about the disease spread.

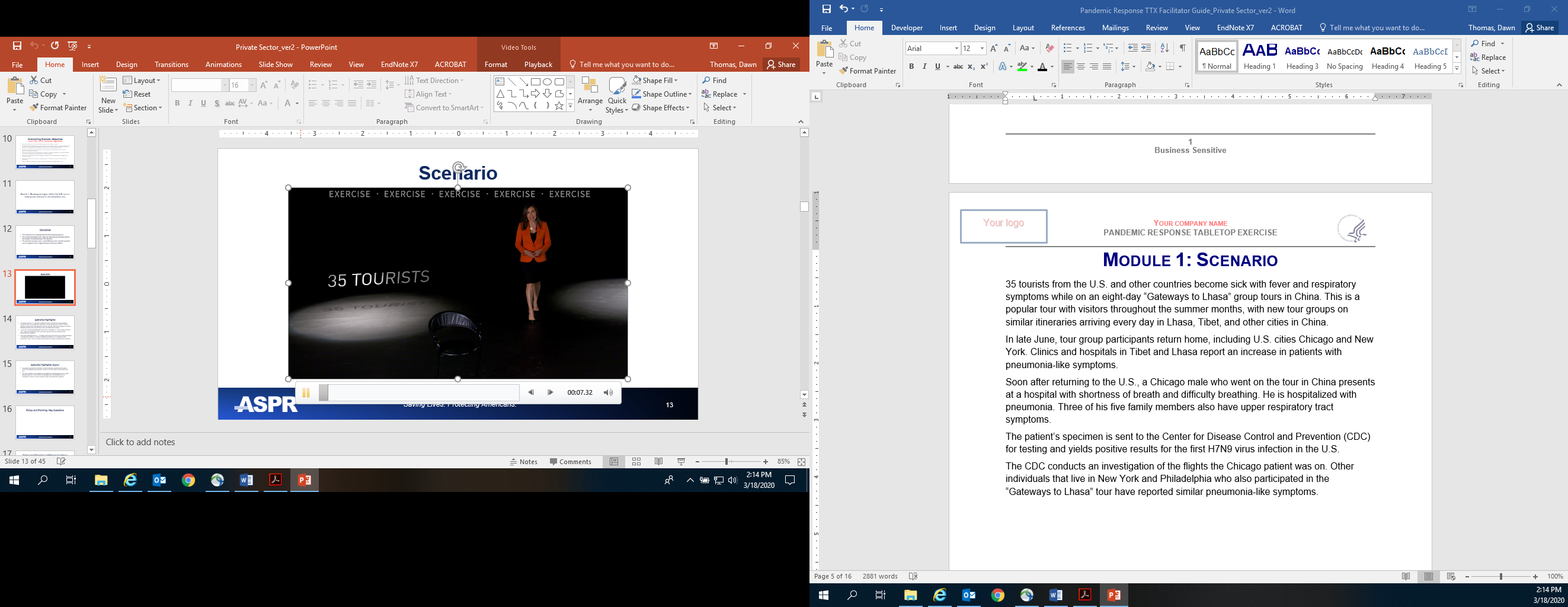
Further scenario details are provided in each of the following three modules.

## Discussion Questions

Discussion questions are intended to help guide the exercise participants’ discussion. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of issues, nor is there a requirement to address every question. The exercise planner and facilitator from your organization will choose which questions to address based on specific company areas of interest.

# Module 1: Scenario

Reminder: The events described below are fictional and intended only for the purpose of participating in this exercise. This exercise scenario uses a novel influenza virus, but this scenario can be applied to other Highly Infectious Diseases (HIDs).



* 35 tourists from the U.S. and other countries become sick with fever and respiratory symptoms while on an eight-day “Gateways to Lhasa” group tours in China. This is a popular tour with visitors throughout the summer months, with new tour groups on similar itineraries arriving every day in Lhasa, Tibet, and other cities in China.
* In late June, tour group participants return home, including U.S. cities Chicago and New York. Clinics and hospitals in Tibet and Lhasa report an increase in patients with pneumonia-like symptoms.
* Soon after returning to the U.S., a Chicago male who went on the tour in China presents at a hospital with shortness of breath and difficulty breathing. He is hospitalized with pneumonia. Three of his five family members also have upper respiratory tract symptoms.
* The Chicago patient’s specimen is sent to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for testing and yields positive results for the first H7N9 virus infection in the U.S.
* The CDC conducts an investigation of the flights the Chicago patient was on. Other individuals that live in New York and Philadelphia who also participated in the “Gateways to Lhasa” tour have reported similar pneumonia-like symptoms.

# Module 1: Discussion Questions

## Issue 1: Policy and Planning

1. What are your immediate plans/actions?
2. What critical resources or supplies are you most concerned about being affected by a disruption in your supply chain?
3. Does your organization have legal and/or regulatory requirements/obligations that you must comply with, even during a public health emergency?
4. How would your organization financially sustain a significant reduction of business?
5. What potential policy issues are you most concerned about and what immediate actions can you take, if any, to address them?

## Issue 2: Incident Management

1. Who is responsible for managing your organization’s response to a severe outbreak?
2. What are the most significant challenges you anticipate with respect to managing your organization’s response to the incident and what immediate actions can you take, if any, to address them?
3. How will you work with state and/or local government to designate your business as essential, allowing you to stay open through lockdowns, curfews, etc.?

## Issue 3: Crisis Communications

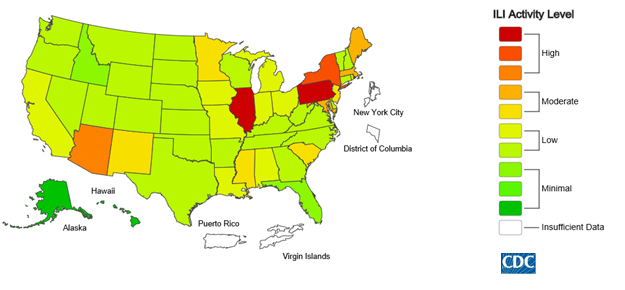
1. What critical messages will you need to communicate to the following groups?
   1. Staff
   2. Customers
   3. Vendors/suppliers

## Issue 4: Healthcare System Surge

1. (For health care organizations) What are your primary concerns with respect to accommodating a large increase in patient numbers or patients with highly specialized health care needs?
2. (For health care organizations) Does your organization maintain a stockpile of medical supplies and resources (e.g., PPE, respirators)? Are the stockpiles ready for deployment?

# Module 2: Scenario

Reminder: The events described below are fictional and intended only for the purpose of participating in this exercise. This exercise scenario uses a novel influenza virus, but this scenario can be applied to other Highly Infectious Diseases (HIDs).



* Human transmission has now occurred in 5 countries, including the U.S., China, Thailand, United Kingdom, and Australia. As a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic alert.
* CDC has issued a Level 3 Travel Health Notice to the public to not travel to countries with confirmed H7N9 cases.
* On July 7, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declares a public health emergency.
* At the end of July, 20 countries have reported a total of 6,225 H7N9 cases [Americas (3,032), Europe (660), Eastern Mediterranean (152), South-East Asia (594) and Western Pacific (1,787)]. Many additional cases are suspected. WHO has now declared the 2019 H7N9 Pandemic.
* By mid-August, there are 12,100 H7N9 cases in the U.S and 18,000 worldwide. The City of Chicago has the most confirmed H7N9 cases of 1,400 and the State of Illinois has 1,600 confirmed cases.
* There is mass fear among the public and people are practicing social distancing. Large events have been canceled, schools are closed, and employees are working from home to stay safe.
* Absenteeism is now causing extreme issues to critical infrastructure systems, including water, power, medical facilities, and supply chains.

# Module 2: Discussion Questions

## Issue 1: Policy and Planning

1. What key indicators or triggers are you relying on to decide when to implement your emergency plan and/or business continuity plan?
2. What is your organization’s policy regarding employee absenteeism and sick leave?
3. Does your organization have policies and procedures if employees or customers contract an infectious disease while working at or visiting your place of business?
4. What actions can you take to protect your employees in the workplace?
5. What actions can you take, if any, to adjust your operations in response to disruptions in your critical supply chains?
6. Will your insurance provide financial support/relief if you suffer financial losses as a result of a severe outbreak?

## Issue 2: Incident Management

1. How has your incident management approach changed as the incident becomes more severe?
2. What social distancing measures (e.g., staggering workstations, canceling social events, alternating work shifts) have you implemented at this point?
3. How might you deal with absenteeism rates of 15 – 25%?
4. Are you coordinating with other companies within your community and/or business sector?
5. How are you coordinating with government entities to ensure your response is consistent with current government guidance, to support the government’s response, and to represent your interests and the needs of elected officials and decision-makers?

## Issue 3: Crisis Communications

1. How has your approach to risk communication changed as the incident becomes more severe?
2. How are you communicating the social distancing guidance you have put into place?

## Issue 4: Healthcare System Surge

1. (For health care organizations) What key indicators or triggers are you using to decide when to activate your surge plan?
2. (For health care organizations) how will you implement a change from conventional to contingency or crisis standards of care?
3. (For health care organizations) As health care supply chains are stressed and critical resource shortages arise, what essential information are you relying on to make decisions about resource prioritization and allocation?
4. (For health care organizations) If you are a health care organization, how are you coordinating with public health authorities to request support?
5. (For non-health care organizations) Are there any ways that your company can reduce the burden on the health care system?

# Module 3: Scenario

Reminder: The events described below are fictional and intended only for the purpose of participating in this exercise. This exercise scenario uses a novel influenza virus, but this scenario can be applied to other Highly Infectious Diseases (HIDs).

* The overall impact of the pandemic on government and businesses in the U.S. have been unprecedented.
  + Government agencies were forced to scale back services to their most essential functions and government employees worked from home or implementing flexible work schedules to minimize human contact.
  + Limited travel has resulted in devastating impacts to the transportation sector and tourism.
  + It will take time for factories and manufacturing companies to get back online and return to normal operations.
  + Community businesses (i.e. restaurants, shops) have also been greatly impacted and experienced significant decline in business.
  + There were widespread cancellations of meetings, conferences, large gatherings, and some private sector businesses have been forced to close.
* There has now been a lift on the more severe protective measures. People are now going back to school, work, and entering public spaces like restaurants.
* Although there is a significant decline in cases, there is some anxiety among the public to return back to normal operations. However, people are excited to reconnect with family, peers, and coworkers.
* Overall, the nation and the world will need to deal with the consequences to businesses on a massive scale (i.e. offering mental health support, replacing staff who may no longer be available to work).
* A second wave of infections could arrive in the coming months, so everyone should be prepared to respond based on the lessons learned from the first wave of infections.

# Module 3: Discussion Questions

## Issue 1: Policy and Planning

1. What is your strategy for reconstituting mission essential functions?
   1. What key indicators or triggers will you use to decide when to reconstitute your mission essential functions?
2. How will you identify and fill key staffing vacancies in the short-term?
3. How will your organization coordinate with vendors and supplies to address critical resource and supply shortfalls?
   1. What changes will you implement to better prepare for shortfalls in anticipation of a second wave
4. How would you fund recovery efforts?
5. Do you have a mechanism in place to identify and document key lessons learned in order to help prepare for possible subsequent waves of a severe outbreak?

## Issue 2: Incident Management

1. How will your incident management structure change as you transition to return to normal operations?
   1. What role will your incident management team maintain in preparation for a second wave?

## Issue 3: Crisis Communications

1. How does your approach to risk communication change as you transition to return to normal operations?
   1. What messages will you develop in anticipation of a second wave?