

Holding an Effective LEPC and TEPC Meeting

Regular Meetings

This section of the LEPC-TEPC Handbook will offer some suggestions on how to conduct more productive meetings. The LEPCs and TEPCs have many tasks they must perform, and the members are volunteers; their time is valuable, and to be successful, the LEPC and TEPC must operate in a businesslike manner. In order to keep members motivated, regular scheduling of meetings is essential.

Regular meetings offer members the opportunity to continue plan review and revision. Regular meetings also allow the LEPC and TEPC to broaden its role in the community to meet the capabilities and the commitment of its members, as well as address local issues and work toward progress on key concerns. The frequency of LEPC or TEPC meetings is not mandated. Circumstances change frequently, along with key phone numbers and contacts. Regular meetings also offer the opportunity for the LEPC or TEPC participants to become familiar with each other and their roles in the community.

Some LEPCs have their meetings on the same day each month so schedules can be planned in advance. Some have their meetings during the lunch hour and the involved agencies and industry take turns providing lunch during the meeting. A well-thought-out agenda is an important tool for conducting effective meetings.

The agenda should identify specific issues to be discussed at the meeting. If time constraints are a factor, each agenda item may be assigned a time limit.

Each committee member should be sent a copy of the agenda one to two weeks before the meeting. With this, you can also send any pertinent information to allow the participants to prepare for the meeting.

Public Meetings

Public meetings offer a clear and immediate benefit; however, public meetings should be used sparingly. LEPCs and TEPCs should hold public meetings to present or review emergency plans. A large public meeting could be useful after an accident when many people have questions.

If a current emergency plan has become controversial, a meeting could offer the community a chance at wider participation in revising it. Again, the LEPC or TEPC chairs should determine how requirements under state or tribal rules may apply to LEPC or TEPC meetings. Posting of meeting dates, times and locations, public comments, and a recording of meeting minutes may be subject to state or tribal rules.

LEPCs and TEPCs are encouraged to seek topics, speakers, invitations from facilities and response organizations, and other opportunities to expand knowledge from a wide variety of

sources. Each meeting should have a record keeper who will produce minutes and a record of all actions.

A copy of these minutes should be provided to all the members of the LEPC or TEPC, and the state (or tribal) Office of Emergency Management. Although LEPCs and TEPCs should attempt to have regularly scheduled meetings, it may be beneficial to move meetings to different locations within the county/planning district. This will allow participants that may not be able to attend at one place and time the opportunity to attend at another.

How to PITCH a Better Meeting

PITCH is the acronym for the process of conducting better meetings:

- Plan
- Inform
- Target
- Contain
- Hasten

PLAN the meeting, being clear about:

- The purpose of the meeting.
- Agenda items.
- The desired outcome.
- What arrangements need to be made.
- How long the meeting will last.

INFORM meeting participants of:

- The purpose of the meeting.
- Agenda items.
- The desired outcome.
- Date, time and location.
- Any previous assignments.

TARGET productive discussion by:

- Stating and clarifying the purpose of the meeting.
- Getting agreement on desired outcomes.
- Allowing for modification of the agenda (including adding/deleting items, changing the order or adjusting the time allocated).

CONTAIN discussion to the agreed-upon agenda by:

- Having someone in charge and someone to act as recorder.
- Adhering to the agenda unless the group explicitly agrees to alter it.
- Confronting behavior that diverts group from attaining its outcomes.
- Encouraging each LEPC or TEPC member attending to participate fully.
- Getting agreement on action steps, responsibilities and target dates.

HASTEN the completion of agreed-upon desired outcomes by:

- Summarizing the meeting.
- Recording the decisions that were made.
- Recording the names of persons responsible for implementing action steps and the target dates.
- Agreeing on a date for the next meeting.
- Evaluating every meeting and agreeing on ways to improve.
- Editing and distributing minutes.
- Putting unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Following up and encouraging task completion.
- Monitoring and evaluating the results achieved by the group.

Role of the Chairman or Meeting Facilitator

- Summarize the last meeting.
- Appoint a recorder.
- Remind members of any commitments or agreements they make for this meeting.
- Review and clarify the agenda if necessary.
- Prioritize tasks if the agenda hasn't already done so.
- Establish specific outcomes desired for this meeting.
- Establish time frames for each task.
- Keep the meeting moving.

Keeping a Meeting Going

The chairman or meeting leader should:

- Keep the members on task.
- Check for agreement or disagreement

- Track progress on the agenda.
- Provide feedback to group—summarize, paraphrase, restate frequently.
- Protect against domination by a few individuals.
- Call on silent members to participate.
- Protect individuals from personal attack.
- Suggest alternatives or options.
- Bring conflicts to the surface.
- Call for breaks.

The Role of the Recorder

The recorder is not the LEPC or TEPC secretary. In fact, the secretary cannot perform both the duties of the secretary and recorder at the same time. The recorder keeps track of what is actually occurring during any given project or discussion period of the meeting.

This information is recorded on flip charts and posted on the walls so the members can keep track of where they are and what still needs to be done.

Preparation

- Ensure a supply of flip charts, markers and tape.
- Use two flip chart easels so you can move from a completed page to a fresh one without interruption.
- Tear off small pieces of masking tape and attach them to the edge of the flip chart easel before the meeting to speed the posting of completed flip chart pages.

Execution

- Tell the members you will record the substance of member contributions as you hear them, and you expect them to review what you've recorded for accuracy.
- Ask for a volunteer to help you post completed pages.
- Record the speaker's words, not your own.
- Do not record names.
- Write legibly but quickly so as not to dampen the group's energy. Don't print unless you print faster than you write.
- If ideas come too fast, ask for help.
- You may express ideas the same as any other member, but remain unobtrusive as the recorder.
- Use different colored markers, numbers, stars, etc. to organize data and for different headings, for emphasis, etc.

- Use only commonly understood abbreviations.
- When you summarize a long idea in key phrases, ask the speaker if you have accurately recorded the idea.

Completion

- Number each page to help keep completed sheets in order.
- At the end of the meeting, compile and label the completed flip chart pages, and make sure they are safely stored and made available for the next meeting, if the project carries over into the next meeting.
- Make sure the members agree on what will be done with the record once the project is complete. You may want to save it, or you may want to discard it or make some other use of it.

Conducting a Meeting

The following guidelines for conducting a meeting are presented for your review and consideration:

Before the Meeting

- Have a specific purpose/objective for each meeting.
- Identify topics and material to be covered.
- Invite key people, guest speakers/presenters.
- Establish an appropriate time frame and neutral place for meeting.
- Prepare an agenda.
- Notify membership of meeting times and distribute the agenda (early).
- Make logistical arrangements—space, seating, audio/video, etc.
- Define scope, goals and objectives of LEPC or TEPC.

At the Beginning of the Meeting

- Start on time.
- Clarify the purpose/objective of the meeting.
- Introduce guests or new personnel.
- Clarify ground rules, e.g., one topic/speaker at a time, etc.
- Establish time objective.
- Appoint a recorder.

During the Meeting

- Make an opening statement and review the minutes of the last meeting.
- Focus on one agenda item at a time, keep the meeting on track.
- Prioritize tasks if the agenda has not already done so.
- Collect and clarify relevant information.
- Maintain control over time and discussions.
- Record ideas and action items.
- Summarize information discussed.
- Reach agreement on specified decisions and actions.
- Keep the meeting moving—do not get distracted or digress off topics.

At the End of the Meeting

- Review action items and responsibilities (who will do what, when).
- Summarize and set follow-up date(s).

After the Meeting

- Prepare minutes and/or follow-up correspondence if necessary.
- Follow up on action items.
- Ask yourself, “What went well?” and “What could be improved?”

Guidelines for Individual LEPC or TEPC Members on Becoming a Better Participant at Meetings

In accordance with Section 301 of EPCRA, the LEPC or TEPC is composed of individuals that represent various types of agencies, departments, organizations, groups or occupations within the planning district, whether the district is a county, a zonal district, a zone within a county, or a tribal region (i.e., law enforcement, fire, EMS, health, ARC, elected officials, emergency management, media, local environmental, hospital, transportation personnel and community groups). These members must represent their constituents in ALL LEPC or TEPC activities and must provide a channel of information and coordination.

Individuals selected as LEPC or TEPC members must realize their responsibilities, and to be successful, must actively represent their constituents in all LEPC or TEPC activities and provide them timely information about the LEPC or TEPC—and, in turn, share their concerns and needs with the LEPC or TEPC.

The following guidelines outline actions each individual member should consider in order to become a better-informed and more productive participant in the activities of the committee.

Before the Meeting

- Review the agenda items and clarify the purpose of the meeting.
- Consider your input in regard to agenda items.
- Gather/prepare any materials/information you may need.
- Talk to people you represent about agenda items and get their comments.
- Arrange material to present in a clear and concise manner.
- Take writing materials with you to the meeting.

During the Meeting

- Arrive on time; be seated and ready to go at the announced start time.
- Participate in discussions and activities.
- Listen to what is being said and consider your comments if needed.
- Stay on the subject being presented.
- Be prepared to present your information and ideas clearly/concisely.
- Avoid side conversations, pay attention and be polite.
- Take your own notes—don't rely strictly on the minutes.

At the End of the Meeting

- Get the date of the next meeting.
- Clarify and items you need to follow up on before the next meeting.
- Ask yourself, “How did I represent my constituents?”
- Remember all LEPC or TEPC members are equal and have a responsibility to represent their peers.