SCRIPT AND INSTRUCTIONS

EXTREME EVENT: RIVER CITY

Prepare Phase.................................................................................................................................................. 2
Respond Phase................................................................................................................................................ 5
Recover Phase ................................................................................................................................................ 12
Adapt Phase.................................................................................................................................................... 14

Key

Black text is the facilitator’s script (the part you actually read aloud).

Blue italics indicates instructions for facilitator/helpers.

⏰ indicates a timing tip.
🎵 indicates when to play a sound effect.
💻 indicates when to switch to a new visual effect on the projection screen.
PREPARE PHASE

This phase takes about 20 minutes. Players sit in their sector groups to decide which resources to invest in. You may tailor the intro to fit your group and your personality.

Play RIVER CITY AMBIANCE as players enter the game room.

Play River City PowerPoint on a continuous loop throughout this phase.

When you are ready to start the game, play FANFARE to get everyone’s attention.

[Encourage everyone to take a seat at their sector tables.]

It’s time to get started! This room has been transformed into River City, a town where we all live. I’m your Chief Resilience Officer.

For the next hour, we’ll embark on an adventure that raises interesting and surprising questions about disasters and resilience.

Just like in a real disaster, you won’t know what’s coming next, and there won’t always be an easy answer. Just make the best decisions you can at each stage, and afterward we’ll debrief on what happened.

So, are you ready, River City? [Wait for response. Solicit enthusiasm!] Come on, you can do better than that! I said, “Are you ready, River City?”

That’s what I’m talking about. It is a great day in River City. That snow just kept coming this past winter, didn’t it? I know I was glad to see the last of it melt away a few weeks ago. And now the corn farmers are out there seeding the fields.
But we’re not here to talk about farming. We’re here to talk about resilience.

We as a community are trying to figure out what it takes to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events. We call this resilience.

As your name tags indicate, you are all important leaders in this city. Where are River City’s Households? Raise your hands.


Before we begin, please take a few minutes to introduce yourselves to the people at your table from the perspective of the character indicated on your name tag. Think about your specific role in the community and what your character brings to the table. When you’re done introducing yourselves, take a look at the sector card on your table and read it aloud to your group. Okay, go!

[Allow a few minutes for introductions.]

Okay, ready to start? That was the easy part. Here comes the hard part. You are gathered in your sectors today because you’re interested in trying to figure out how we can help make River City more resilient. These meetings are part of an ongoing process to build coalitions within and across each of these sectors in our community.

[Hold resource cards in the air.] Each sector will receive a set of resources to consider.

[Distribute resource cards, prepare phase rules, resource description sheets, and maps to each sector.]
Your table has a set of 24 resources to consider. Some of these are long-term investments that would help River City for years to come. Others are short-term resources that could become crucial during a crisis.

But time and funding are limited! As a group, you must select 12 resources to invest in and 12 resources to discard. Then, distribute your selected resources among the players at your table.

Use the resource description sheets to learn more about the resources. If you need a refresher on key facts about our city, check out the slideshow. I’ll give you a 3 minute warning when you’ll need to start wrapping up.

Invest wisely—River City is counting on you!

Observe players to see how quickly they’re progressing. Give a 3-minute warning when it looks like sectors are wrapping up. Allow enough time for discussion, but not enough time for players to get bored.

Play LIGHT RAIN sound effect.

I have just been informed that a large, low-pressure weather system is making its way toward us from the north. Forecasters are saying it could bring a series of severe storms with heavy rain and wind gusts up to 60 miles per hour. Take 3 more minutes to make your final selections and distribute the 12 selected resources at your tables.
RESPOND PHASE

This phase takes about 20-30 minutes. Players solve challenges affecting their neighborhoods.

Okay, it’s time to make your final selections! I need one person from each sector to hold up the 12 resource cards that your group did not invest in.

[Collect discards.]

Congratulations on making these tough choices. Becoming a more resilient city is hard work, but is critically important! Now, I know you all have other items on your meeting agendas besides talking about resilience...

Music: Play ALERT sound effect to interrupt facilitator.

End River City PowerPoint and start Flooding PowerPoint (on continuous loop).

Oh no! The first of the storms we were warned about has arrived and another is on the way. Officials predict 3 inches of rain today and another 3 tomorrow. Batten down the hatches, folks, looks like this downpour is just the beginning.

With this rain going on for days and the ground already saturated, especially in the newly plowed fields, flooding is pretty much inevitable. There’s no more time to prepare—it’s time to respond!

Music: Play LIGHTNING sound effect.

[Flip over challenge boards so players can see the challenges. Remove sector cards and prepare phase rule sheets from tables.]
Quick! Get up! Take your resources with you and go to your neighborhoods to help your local community weather the floods! [Create suspense through a sense of urgency in your voice and actions.]

If you’re so distraught that you can’t remember where you live, check your name tag.

Who lives in Meadowland? Raise your hand! Head over that way! [Point to location of each neighborhood to help guide players to their neighborhoods.]

Riverside, over there! Clearwater…Lakeshore…Downtown…Waterview – there, there, there, and there!

Don’t forget to bring your resources with you. Your neighborhood will need them! Batten down the hatches! This is not a drill!

[Distribute respond phase rule sheets to each table. Once everyone has found their new tables, continue reading the script.]

Wow, this deluge is not letting up! River City is already facing some huge challenges and each neighborhood is being affected in a different way!

[Point to a nearby challenge board for reference.] You have two viable options. You’ll work with your neighbors to pick an option. Ask yourselves two questions:

1. What’s the right thing to do?
2. What’s best for the city as a whole?

Under each option is a list of resources you need. These are divided into five categories.
Each neighborhood earns 100 points for each category completed within the option it has selected. So, if your group chooses Option B and you complete 3 categories on the right-hand side of your board, you get 300 points.

Your goal is to fill all five categories for your selected option. You also want to contribute to the resilience of the city as a whole.

Here are the details:

1. Add a resource card to your board by placing the card onto its corresponding spot on your board.
2. If there is an “OR” between two resources, you need ONE or the OTHER to fulfill that category.
3. If two resources are next to each other and there’s no “OR” between them, then you need BOTH cards to fulfill that category.
4. You may switch to the other option on your board if circumstances require it. But, there is no extra credit if you complete (or attempt) both options.
5. To give or trade a resource, simply hand the resource card to the other player.

One more thing—please assign one of your players to stay at your neighborhood’s table. This person should monitor your challenge board and listen for important messages and updates. You never know what a storm like this might bring!

Now’s the time to put your resources to use and your coalitions into action! Solve your neighborhood challenge and help the city weather this storm.

[Issue surprise challenges to make this phase more complex and exciting. We recommend issuing a surprise challenge about every five minutes throughout this phase; however, none are strictly required. They can be used in any order.]

SURPRISE CHALLENGE – EXPLOSION
The pressure of the floodwaters has caused a gas line to spring a leak, causing an explosion near the Emergency Command Center. We need to redirect critical resources to respond to the emergency.

Remove the following cards from your challenge board now.

- 10 Fire/Rescue Personnel
- 3 Helicopters
- Emergency Command Center
- 10 Gas Masks

These resources can no longer be used to solve your neighborhood’s challenge.

[Walk over and place an “X” card in the resource slots for 10 Fire/Rescue Personnel, 3 Helicopters, Emergency Command Center, and 10 Gas Masks on the challenge boards of affected neighborhoods. If any resource cards were already in these slots, they must be discarded.]
SURPRISE CHALLENGE – TECH OUTAGE
(pick one neighborhood or apply to whole city)

🎵 Play LIGHTNING sound effect.

Oh no! A lightning strike in your neighborhood has caused an electromagnetic pulse, disabling critical communications infrastructure.

Remove the following cards from your challenge board now.

- Mobile Phones
- Coordinated Traffic Management
- High-Security IT System
- Citywide Alert System

These resources can no longer be used to solve your neighborhood’s challenge.

[Walk over and place an “X” card in the resource slots for Mobile Phones, Coordinated Traffic Management, High-Security IT System, and Citywide Alert System on the challenge boards of affected neighborhoods. If any resource cards were already in these slots, they must be discarded.]
SURPRISE CHALLENGE – BRIDGE CLOSURE
(pick one neighborhood or apply to whole city)

🎵 Play TRAFFIC sound effect.

Bridge Closure! Flooding has blocked access to a major bridge. Your neighborhood is cut off until ferries can be organized to help people cross the river.

All of your players must return to their neighborhood immediately. If anyone is visiting other neighborhoods, go get them right away. Your neighborhood may not give, receive, or exchange any resources until the problem is resolved.

[Help affected neighborhoods bring their players back to their tables.]

[Wait a few minutes.]

Okay! The ferries are up and running. You can now leave your table and start exchanging resources with other neighborhoods again.
SURPRISE CHALLENGE – MAPPING GLITCH
(pick one neighborhood or apply to whole city)

♫ Play ERROR sound effect.

Mapping Glitch! There is a problem with our flood prediction software and you must correct it with some manual calculations.

If you are successful, you will be rewarded with the opportunity to select a resource card from the discard pile.

If you fail, your Detailed Flood Maps will be useless. Hurry! You only have 5 minutes!

[Walk over and hand Flood Prediction Challenge sheet to affected neighborhood. After 5 minutes, check players’ answers against answer key.]

IF CORRECT: Let the neighborhood pick one resource card from those that were discarded during the Prepare phase. This card can now be used on any challenge board.

IF INCORRECT: Remove all “Detailed Flood Maps” cards from the neighborhood’s challenge board and place an “X” card in the Detailed Flood Maps slot(s).
Heads up River City residents! It’s time to stop exchanging resources and return to your neighborhoods to solve your challenges as best you can!

[Help players return to their neighborhoods. If needed, allow a few minutes for players to make final selections on their challenge boards.]

RECOVER PHASE

This phase takes about 10 minutes. You’ll enter scores for each neighborhood.

Whew! The rain has stopped and the sky is clear again. It’s time to assess the damage.

Did our preparations pay off? Were we able to activate our coalitions to successfully move resources to areas in need around the city?

End Flooding PowerPoint and open Scoreboard PDF.

Meadowland: You guys faced a terrible situation in which the city jail started to flood, compromising inmate safety and security. Which option did you choose, and why did you make that decision?

[Allow for brief discussion, then check board and enter score for Meadowland – 100 points for each completed category.]

Riverside: Your neighborhood is home to many low-income residents with limited English proficiency. Did you evacuate and help residents find shelter, or
bolster the neighborhood’s flood protection? What factors influenced your choice?

[Discuss, then check board and enter score for Riverside.]

Clearwater: The hydroelectric power station was damaged by the storm. Where did you devote the city’s limited electricity, and how did you make that decision?

[Discuss, then check board and enter score for Clearwater.]

Lakeshore: You had to make a gut wrenching choice about which area of the city to flood. Did you open the spillway and flood our beloved historic district, or did you let the reservoir flood the University’s esteemed research facilities? What were your reasons?

[Discuss, then check board and enter score for Lakeshore.]

Downtown: After the waters receded, you had to decide which of the city’s two economic engines to reopen first—the port or the business district. Which one did you pick, and why?

[Discuss, then check board and enter score for Downtown.]

Waterview: You had two schools shut down due to flooding. Did you transfer the students to other districts, or quickly repair and reopen the damaged schools? What factors influenced your choice?

[Discuss, then check board and enter score for Waterview.]

Well done everyone! It looks like we had [number] neighborhoods get all the resources they needed through key investments in short- and long-term resources while effectively activating their coalitions across the city.
Resilience isn’t just about one neighborhood or one challenge. It’s about River City as a whole, isn’t it? Let’s see how we did as a city. [Show total score.]

Really great work!

🎵 Play APPLAUSE sound effect.

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**ADAPT PHASE**

During this phase you’ll discuss the game and help players draw lessons about resilience in real life. It takes about 15-20 minutes.

Let’s take a few moments to reflect on how we did and think about how River City might be more resilient in the future.

1. Let’s go back to the beginning of the game during the Prepare Phase when we were in our sector meetings. Think about how you came to a consensus about what resources to invest in.

   Were there any interesting dynamics in your conversations? How did you decide which disaster types to focus on, and how did you weigh different short- and long-term resources?

   [Call on someone from each sector: Households, Community Groups, Businesses, First Responders, Local & State Government, Federal Government.]

2. Now, let’s talk about what happened when the storm hit and you went to your neighborhoods. Was the event anything like what you expected?
We treated the challenges like they were all happening at once. As you may have guessed, they represent different points in time during a flooding disaster.

For example, some challenges happen early on. Flooding of basements and low-lying areas poses an initial threat (Meadowland and Riverside). Other challenges happen after a few days, when rivers and reservoirs start backing up and overflowing (Clearwater and Lakeshore). Still other challenges occur after the waters have receded (Downtown and Waterview).

Think about how the resources you discarded in the beginning of the game affected you during the storm. For example, there was only one Flood Insurance resource card available, and only the Federal Government had access to it. It was required to complete Option B in both Downtown and Waterview. If the Federal Government sector did not invest in this resource early in the game, then that decision would have ripple effects during a disaster. What other examples can you identify where decisions made in the first phase affected your options later on?

[Call on someone from each neighborhood: Meadowland, Riverside, Clearwater, Lakeshore, Downtown, Waterview.]

3. Think about the dynamic in the room when people were exchanging resources to solve their neighborhood challenges.

What strategies did you use to communicate with other players? How useful were the coalitions you made at your sector meetings in the beginning of the game once the storm hit?
Were other neighborhoods willing to share resources and information with you, or did people take a more competitive approach?

(Call on players who you saw sharing resources and those who you saw hoarding or bartering.)

4. When you were responding to the crises in your neighborhoods, there were a few surprise events that shifted your priorities or capabilities.

How did these affect your neighborhood? How did they affect the city as a whole?

(Discuss each of the challenges you deployed: Explosion, Tech Outage, Bridge Closure, Mapping Glitch.)

5. What elements of the game felt like something that could happen in real life? What elements didn’t feel very realistic? What can we learn about becoming more resilient from a game like this?

Take a look at the city map. How did city planning affect the city’s vulnerability and response? How might you design things differently in the city to be more resilient?

(Ask probing questions to expand the conversation and drive home the key learning outcomes related to coalition building, short- and long-term resource investment, and city planning for flood resilience.)

Advance to next slide on Scoreboard PDF.

This game was developed in collaboration with experts and staff of the Resilience Project at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.
The Academies has pointed out that America could be more resilient in the future if the nation acts to ensure that the following conditions exist in 2030. Let’s read them together.

1. Information on risks and vulnerabilities to individuals and communities is transparent and easily accessible by all.
2. All levels of government, communities, and the private sector have designed resilience strategies and operation plans based on this information.
3. Proactive investments and policy decisions—including those to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters—have reduced the human and economic toll of disasters.
4. Community coalitions are widely organized and supported to provide essential services before and after disasters occur.
5. Recovery after disasters is rapid, and the per capita federal cost of responding to disasters has been declining for a decade.

What these goals highlight is that in order for communities and our nation to become more resilient now and in the future, we need to think carefully about investing in both short-term and long-term resources, especially across different sectors.

Today’s Extreme Event game focused on goal #4 in particular—the critical role of community coalitions.

To get through the game, you had to build coalitions within your sectors, within your neighborhood, and across the city as a whole. You put your coalitions into action first by working together to figure out which resources you needed to invest in to make the city more resilient. Then you used those coalitions and others when you shared resources and communicated information about neighborhood challenges and needs during the storm and its aftermath.
I hope this experience has made it clear that we need to lay the groundwork now and reach out to other people in all sectors of our community to create coalitions that will stand the test of any potential disaster.

Does anyone have any closing thoughts that they would like to share?

Well done, everyone!

♫ Play APPLAUSE sound effect.

[If using printed post-game handouts, distribute them now.]

End of game. Thanks for playing!

Please take a moment complete our 5-minute survey at Extreme-Event.org.

We’d love to hear how your game went!