

# How do we know our teams are #ReadyToRespond under pressure?

## Pushing the boundaries of large-scale exercise programmes

Incidents are becoming more complex, and the expectations for responses have never been greater. The level of scrutiny is higher, and the consequences of failing to respond effectively are more significant. So, how do we ensure our teams are always Ready To Respond and perform when the pressure is really on?

## ExxonMobil's Emergency Preparedness and Response Framework

ExxonMobil has a mature emergency preparedness and response framework with three key aspects:

- Availability of trained and competent response personnel from within the business line.
- A programme of drills and exercises to ensure continuous readiness.
- Integrating lessons from past events into training and exercises.

Trained teams and dedicated resources are maintained at the business-unit level, supported by strategic Emergency Support Groups and Regional Response Teams (RRTs). ExxonMobil's internal capability is augmented by industry mutual aid arrangements and professional response organisations such as OSRL.

## The Role of Regional Response Teams

Regional Response Teams support business units in incidents that exceed local capability or require specialist expertise. RRTs are composed of staff from across the organisation who receive specialist training and come together in annual exercises. Members are selected based on their expertise in fields relevant to emergency response, including environmental science, engineering, finance, logistics, health and safety, and public and government affairs.

While they have the skillset to support emergency response, most RRT Members are not professional responders in their day jobs. Therefore, a rigorous focus on learning and development is in place to build confidence, competence, and readiness to respond if called upon.

## The RRT Exercise Programme

The RRT Exercise Programme has been running for several years. As the baseline competence of the team has improved, exercises have increased in complexity to ensure they are as realistic and stretching as possible. Since 2023, one of the objectives for the RRT has been to develop mental skills to perform under pressure.

## Developing Mental Skills to Perform Under Pressure

ExxonMobil partnered with OSRL to implement a mental skills development programme for RRT members. The programme is built around three things:

- Training RRT Members on a simple toolkit to perform under pressure by managing their mindset, based on a framework developed by Gazing Performance Systems.
- Teaching RRT Members to distinguish between the "Red" and "Blue" mental states. The "Red" state is characterized by anxiety and distraction, while the "Blue" state is a calm and focused mindset.
- Providing practical tools to help RRT Members recognize when they are in a "Red" state and shift back into "Blue," including breathing exercises, focus redirection, and rituals to regain control and focus.

## Clear and Measurable Impact

Evaluation and feedback have quantified the impact of the mental skills development programme. Comparing exercises held in 2023 and 2024, the aggregated data for the group wearing heart-rate monitors showed:

- Stress and recovery balance scores improved by 12 percentage points from Moderate to Fairly Good.
- Sleep scores improved by 14 percentage points from Poor to Moderate.
- Physical activity scores decreased by 10 percentage points from Fairly Good to Moderate.

Capturing this data provided insight into the environmental factors that can be considered for future exercises and responses. Leaders within the exercise focused on managing their own and their colleagues' energy levels, promoting a culture of wellbeing and energy management.

## Conclusion

The criticality of being able to perform at the highest levels under the pressure of a real incident needs no explanation. By employing novel approaches to training, pushing the boundaries of exercises further, and testing our people in more complex simulations, we are not complacent but can feel confident that we are doing everything possible to be #ReadyToRespond.