HIGH-STAKES DECISION SIMULATION

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Choose a Scenario**

- As a group, **select one of the four challenges** provided.
- Read the scenario carefully and discuss **key risks and challenges**.

2. **Analyze the Situation**

- What **critical information is missing**?
- Who are the **stakeholders**, and what are their priorities?
- What are the **biggest risks** if you make the wrong decision?

3. **Make Your Decision**

- What **immediate action** will you take?
- How will you **balance speed vs. accuracy**?
- How will you **communicate your decision** to leadership, the public, or your team?

4. **Present Your Decision**

- Share your **decision and reasoning** in **3 minutes**.
- Be ready for **one follow-up question** from another group.

CHALLENGE #1. PUBLIC SAFETY CRISIS: UNCONFIRMED THREAT TO STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

📍 **Scenario:**
You are the **Deputy Commissioner of Homeland Security** for your state. It's **7:30 AM**, and your office receives an **anonymous tip** that an individual is planning to **disable power stations across the state during peak evening hours**.

📌 **The Challenge:**

- The **caller provided vague information**, and law enforcement **cannot confirm if the threat is credible**.
- If you escalate and go public **too soon**, it could cause **panic, economic disruption, and political backlash**.
- If you **wait too long**, and the threat is real, you could **fail to prevent a serious attack**.
- The **Governor's office is asking for an immediate briefing**, but you don't have enough verified details.
- Homeland Security **is debating raising the state's threat level**, which could trigger **emergency resource allocation and National Guard activation**.

⏳ **Decision Required: What do you do in the next 30 minutes?**

- Do you **publicly announce the potential threat**, or keep it classified for now?
- Do you **mobilize law enforcement and emergency response teams immediately**, or wait for confirmation?
- How do you **brief the Governor and other key officials**, knowing the media may learn of the threat?

👉 **Key Complexity Factors:**

- **Incomplete intelligence** – Is the threat real or a hoax?
- **Public panic vs. security preparedness** – If you act too soon, you may **cause unnecessary alarm**, but waiting could be dangerous.
- **Political and public trust considerations** – Your decision will be scrutinized by state leaders and citizens.

CHALLENGE #2. MAJOR TRAFFIC INCIDENT: MULTI-CAR PILEUP ON AN INTERSTATE DURING AN ICE STORM

📍 **Scenario:**
You are the **Director of Emergency Management** for your state. A **massive winter storm** has hit overnight, leading to a **50+ vehicle pileup on a major interstate**. **Multiple fatalities and dozens of injuries** have been reported. Emergency responders are struggling to access the scene due to the ice-covered roads.

📌 **The Challenge:**

- The **highway remains impassable**, but **rerouting traffic could take hours**, leading to stranded motorists in freezing conditions.
- **Hospitals in the region are near capacity**—transporting injured people will require sending some patients **to distant medical facilities**.
- The **Governor is demanding an immediate update** and wants to know if **a state of emergency should be declared**.
- Your **weather team predicts another round of snow and ice**, which could worsen conditions.
- Tow trucks **can't clear the wreckage fast enough**, and some vehicles **contain hazardous materials**.

⏳ **Decision Required: How do you respond in the next hour?**

- Do you **shut down additional highways to prevent further pileups**, or keep them open for emergency access?
- Do you **request National Guard assistance**, or rely on local emergency responders?
- What **public messaging** do you issue to keep residents informed without creating panic?

👉 **Key Complexity Factors:**

- **Urgency vs. available resources** – Emergency personnel and hospitals are already stretched thin.
- **Logistics & coordination** – Clearing the highway safely while **getting medical aid to victims quickly**.
- **Public perception** – **Criticism is inevitable** if the response is seen as too slow or mishandled.

CHALLENGE #3. CYBERATTACK ON STATE GOVERNMENT SERVERS

📍 **Scenario:**
You are the **Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) for the Department of Safety & Homeland Security**. At **9:00 AM**, your team detects a **possible ransomware attack** targeting **critical state systems**, including **DMV records, emergency response coordination tools, and police databases**.

📌 **The Challenge:**

- The **cybersecurity team is still assessing the extent of the attack**—you don't yet know if **sensitive data has been stolen**.
- If you **shut down all state systems immediately**, it could disrupt **law enforcement, emergency dispatching, and government services statewide**.
- If you **leave the systems running**, the attack could spread further and cause more damage.
- The **Governor's office and media outlets are asking for an immediate response**, but releasing details **too soon could create public concern** and **tip off the attackers**.
- Your **team is debating whether to pay the ransom or try to restore backups**, but backup systems **may not be fully up to date**.

⏳ **Decision Required: What do you do in the next 60 minutes?**

- Do you **shut down affected systems immediately**, or wait for more data?
- How do you **coordinate with law enforcement** to investigate the cyberattack while maintaining operational readiness?
- What **public messaging strategy** do you use to address concerns without creating panic?

👉 **Key Complexity Factors:**

- **Speed vs. accuracy** – You **don't have all the facts** yet but need to act fast.
- **Balancing transparency and control** – Announcing an attack too soon **may erode public confidence**.
- **Strategic risk management** – Deciding whether to **pay the ransom or attempt recovery**.

CHALLENGE #4. DRIVER'S SERVICES SYSTEM FAILURE DURING PEAK HOURS

📍 **Scenario:**
You are the **Director of Driver Services** for your state's Department of Safety & Homeland Security. At **10:30 AM on a Monday morning**, your team alerts you that the **statewide driver's license and vehicle registration system has crashed** at all **DMV service centers and online portals**.

📌 **The Challenge:**

- It's **the busiest day of the week**, with **hundreds of customers already waiting** in service centers and thousands more trying to **renew licenses online**.
- IT is still **diagnosing the issue** and **cannot guarantee a time for system restoration**—it **could be back in an hour, or it could take all day**.
- Customers **who scheduled appointments in advance are demanding answers**.
- Many people **urgently need renewals for travel, employment, or commercial driving purposes**.
- The **Governor's office is asking for a briefing**, and **local news stations are reporting on the outage**.
- You have the option to **manually process some transactions**, but it would be **time-consuming and only cover a small percentage of customers**.

⏳ **Decision Required: What do you do in the next 30 minutes?**

- Do you **send customers home** and reschedule appointments, or try to continue operations with manual workarounds?
- What **communication plan** do you put in place to update customers, employees, and government officials?
- Do you **escalate the issue as a public emergency**, or handle it internally for now?

👉 **Key Complexity Factors:**

- **Customer service expectations** – Long waits and delays will **lead to public frustration**.
- **Uncertainty in IT resolution** – You don't know **how long the outage will last**.
- **Balancing manual and automated processes** – Is there a **partial workaround** that can still serve urgent needs?