



SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

This section provides tips for how to conduct useful and successful exercises and how to overcome common barriers.

- » Conducting exercises is critical for preparedness.
- » There are many public health aspects of emergencies to consider when planning an exercise.
- » There are many excellent resources for planning and conducting successful exercises; links to key resources are included in this section.
- » Federal agencies provide grants and other resources to state and local organizations to conduct exercises.



CONDUCTING EXERCISES FOR PREPAREDNESS

Without a doubt, the single most consistent issue among public officials, public health officials, and first responders is the need to plan for and hold drills and exercises. Many federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), have been providing grants and other resources to state and local organizations to help support such exercise programs. All around the country, the capacity for and sophistication of holding such exercises has grown tremendously since September 11. While public health officials, first responders, and other public officials have been conducting exercises, these various sectors have not always come together to plan and implement their exercises. It is the collaboration of these critical sectors that can take what is an excellent local exercise program to a greater level of sophistication and improve its value for enhancing preparedness.

This section provides some suggestions for public health aspects of emergencies that can be incorporated into your exercise program, some basic tips for planning successful exercises, and a wealth of resources to help plan and implement exercises.

PUBLIC HEALTH ASPECTS OF EMERGENCIES TO CONSIDER IN EXERCISE PLANNING

- › Requesting, receiving, and distributing medications, supplies or equipment (such as ventilators) from the Strategic National Stockpile
- › Distributing pharmaceuticals for treatment and/or prophylaxis
- › Implementing ring or mass vaccinations
- › Caring for mass casualties
- › Providing care for burns or other trauma
- › Setting up a mass mortuary
- › Decontaminating
- › Developing mutual aid networks for your community
- › Providing mental health support for responders, survivors, and other community members
- › Importing private health professionals from neighboring states (address licensing issues, executive orders, etc.)
- › Testing other emergency-related policies
- › Coordinating with hospitals and public health clinics (remember these are entirely different systems)

- › Activating the Health Alert Network in your area
- › Translating epidemiological investigations into policy decisions, operational/management decisions, and public communications messages
- › Operating a Joint Information Center with public health and using other ways to ensure ongoing information sharing and collaboration
- › Activating emergency health services available from HHS and/or the Federal Emergency Management Agency
- › Communicating with the public about health risks and protective behaviors
- › Providing for isolation and quarantine measures
- › Evacuating and sheltering-in-place

COMMON BARRIERS TO CONDUCTING SUCCESSFUL EXERCISES

Just the thought of planning and implementing exercises can be overwhelming. Today's first responders and public officials are faced with more and more demands on training time and resources. It simply is not possible to spend as much time as one might want planning, implementing, and addressing the issues uncovered by exercises. And yet this is one of the most important challenges for all of us in the emergency response and management community. Some things that often get in the way of success include:

- › Overcomplicated scenarios and drills
- › The wrong people or too many people at the table
- › Unclear objectives
- › Time constraints
- › Lack of funding
- › Competing interests and priorities during the exercise
- › Difficulty getting buy-in and/or funding for exercises that address catastrophic issues that would have huge consequences but are of relatively low probability
- › Thinking of the exercise as a demonstration that you know what you are doing and that you cannot or should not make mistakes; similarly, thinking that nothing should "go wrong" during the exercise



“ TO GET TO THE POINT WHERE YOU HAVE COORDINATION

and communication among agencies, you have to have meetings months and months in advance, as well as debriefings after the events to see how to make improvements. I think the three most important points are planning, response, and debriefing, as well as making sure you have all the right players at the table. You have to make sure to be prepared for the event before it happens, instead of just reacting.”

Bob DeVries, Chief, Kingman (Arizona) Police Department

10 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL EXERCISES AND OVERCOMING COMMON BARRIERS

There are many ways to plan and conduct useful exercises. They don't have to be full scale, field-based exercises to be useful; they don't have to entail months of planning or expensive outside consultants. What useful exercises do require is the right people at the table, clear objectives that are tied to local threats and concerns, and a practical approach that enables the group to learn and improve plans and skills.

- 1. Keep it local.** Be sure to include local issues, threats, and concerns in your scenario.
- 2. Keep it simple.** Your scenario doesn't have to be complicated to be effective. To avoid confusion at the beginning, start off with an obvious emergency. A paragraph describing the situation, followed by bulleted facts, next steps, or actions that have been taken, is all that is needed to get the ball rolling. The purpose of the written scenario is to provide a common starting point for everyone involved.
- 3. Have specific objectives.** You don't have to test every aspect of emergency response and management at one time. For example, you might want to separately explore:
 - › Policy and interagency communications conflicts
 - › Roles and coordination among agencies
 - › Messages and release of public information
 - › Discovery of emergency powers that may be needed to cope with public health emergencies
- 4. Invite the right people to participate.** If the objectives are focused on policy conflicts, make sure the people responsible for setting policy are involved. If the objectives are related to

messages and public communications, ensure that the public information officers are there.

- 5. Include both operations and communications issues and personnel in the exercise.** This will help build bridges for the future.
- 6. Make sure to invite public health, public officials, and first responders to the exercise, at a minimum.** The relationships forged will be invaluable for the future, and each will learn more about the others' roles, responsibilities, resources, and approaches to emergencies. Don't forget the private sector (e.g., ambulance services, hospitals) and other officials to improve cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- 7. Keep participants focused on the exercise.** Do everything you can to take people away from their desks and cell phones for at least a limited time (start with a 2-hour exercise) to minimize day-to-day distractions.
- 8. Keep your eye on the ball.** The purpose of exercises is to explore how you will approach a problem, go through the motions of the response, and discover gaps in procedures, policies, and skills that need to be addressed. Successful exercises are not used simply to demonstrate that your procedures are sound—they are used to continually improve plans, build relationships, and improve infrastructures to address whatever may happen in the future.
- 9. Make the actions as real as possible during the exercise, even for small, tabletop exercises.** For example, if someone says, “we'd call so-and-so to take care of this,” have them pick up the phone and call that person. Make sure they have the right number, that the person is still in that position, and that he or she would be able to take the expected action.



10. Follow up on your exercise. Don't just walk away when it's over. Make a written list of lessons learned and implications for next steps and improvements. Make a plan for getting those things done. Don't allow your debriefing to deteriorate into a rehash of what happened or did not happen. Focus instead on the implications for improving preparedness.

RESOURCES FOR EXERCISING

The following resources are listed alphabetically by organization. Most of these resources are health-oriented, but we have also included a few resources focused more broadly on all hazards or on terrorism.

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Smallpox: An Attack Scenario

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol15no4/otoole.htm>

The smallpox scenario is intended to provoke thought and dialogue that might illuminate the uncertainties and challenges of bioterrorism and stimulate review of institutional capacities for rapid communication and coordinated action in the wake of an attack.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Compendium of Federal Terrorism Training for State and Local Audiences

http://www.fema.gov/compendium/course_detail.jsp?id=239

This course consists of five separate scenarios, each using a different terrorist weapon. The objectives of the course are to (1) evaluate a jurisdiction's ability to respond to and recover from terrorist attacks and (2) develop a plan to improve the jurisdiction's ability to respond to and recover from terrorist attacks.

Comprehensive Exercise Curriculum

<http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/CEC/CECCourses.asp>

The Comprehensive Exercise Curriculum provides a comprehensive array of classroom and hands-on experiences designed to improve the individual's ability to manage exercise programs and administer emergency management exercises.

The Comprehensive Exercise Curriculum Job Aids

<http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/CEC/CECJobaids.asp>

This Web site provides resources to help in planning, executing, and evaluating a local exercise.

Emergency Management Master Exercise Practitioner Program

<http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/CEC/emiopt.asp>

Emergency Management Master Exercise Practitioner Program eligibility is open to local, state, territorial, tribal, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and other federal agency emergency management and emergency services personnel whose responsibilities involve emergency management exercises.

Independent Study Program: Exercise Design

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is139.asp>

This free, online course covers the purpose, characteristics, and requirements of three main types of exercises: tabletop exercises, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises. In addition, this course covers exercise evaluation, exercise enhancements, and design for a functional exercise.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY AND CITY HEALTH OFFICIALS

Conducting a BT-Table Top: A "How To" Guide

http://www.naccho.org/toolbox/Conducting%20a%20BT%20Tabletop_a%20how%20to%20guide.pdf

This guide provides state and local officials with information and guidance on the key ingredients to consider when developing and facilitating a tabletop exercise.

NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS

Tabletop Exercises

http://www.sph.unc.edu/nccphp/training/all_materials/am_tabletop.htm

This Web site provides information and links to various tabletop exercises dealing with bioterrorism agents.



NORTHWEST CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE

Bioterrorist Attack on Food: A Tabletop Exercise

<http://www.nwcphp.org/training/courses-exercises/courses/bioterrorist-attack-on-food>

This exercise will enable participants to identify the communication, resources, data, coordination, and organizational elements associated with an emergency response. Although the primary goal of this exercise is to address agencywide policies and issues, it also offers participants an opportunity to assess their own preparedness for responding to the scenario and to identify individual needs for information or training.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

First Responders—Resource Links

<http://www.dhs.gov/xfrstresp/>

This resource for first responders supplies links to grants, training and exercises, information sharing tools, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security standards and guidelines.

Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program

<https://hseep.dhs.gov/>

This resource provides a standardized policy, methodology, and terminology for exercise design, development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. It also facilitates the creation of self-sustaining, capabilities-based exercise programs by providing tools and resources such as guidance, training, technology, and direct support.

Lessons Learned Information Sharing

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/>

The Web site acts as a national network of lessons learned and best practices for emergency-response providers and homeland security officials.

