



FEMA

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Policy and Guidance

HSEEP Working Group

Since its formation, the National Exercise Division has worked with various working groups and steering committees as a means to gather feedback and ensure integration of efforts. Last year's HSEEP Working Group provided valuable feedback on the HSEEP Toolkit and other NED initiatives.

An HSEEP Working Group (HSEEPWG) will soon be chartered comprised of members of Federal, State, and local government and emergency management communities. The HSEEPWG will focus on issues relating to refinement and assistance in HSEEP policy and guidance and supporting documentation, communications, training, and technology requirement development (excluding software development). Two identical sessions comprised of approx. 40 attendees (Session 1A and 1B), will convene in Washington D.C. for a two-day period to discuss current initiatives, HSEEP updates, outstanding issues, and future agenda items. Session 1A will meet on August 27-28, 2008; Session 1B will meet on September 3-4, 2008.

Comments and consensus from both teams will be compiled and presented at follow-up sessions, scheduled for November 18-19 (Session 2A) and November 20-21, 2008 (Session 2B).

HSEEP CSEPP-REPP Alignment

Since July 2007, a working group composed of representatives from the HSEEP, Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP), and Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program (REPP) has met to discuss the alignment of exercise processes to provide a greater consistency in planning, scheduling, evaluating, and reporting. The idea is not to change the way the CSEPP and REPP are managed, but to come together to agree on common terminology and doctrine.

After reviewing key policies and programs and a completing a crosswalk of program terminologies, the working group found that HSEEP provides the framework and baseline for conducting exercises and both CSEPP and REPP exercise programs fit within the HSEEP framework and meet their legislative mandates and regulatory requirements.

While there were areas of similarity in the types of exercises conducted, each program contained elements that were unique. It was determined there is a need to coordinate the review and revision schedule for these exercise programs; the group identified short term, mid term and long term changes to align the three exercise processes more closely. Currently, a mechanism is being developed to assure that when one program makes a change, the changes will be consistently reflected in the other two programs.

Workshop and Conference News

Improvement Planning Workshops

The HSEEP evaluation methodology is an analytical process used to assess the demonstration of capabilities during exercises. All discussion-based and operations-based exercises result in the development of an After Action Report/ Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) that provides a description of what happened, best practices or strengths, identifies areas for improvement and provides recommendations for improvement. The Improvement Plan converts lessons learned into concrete and measurable steps.

In order to maximize the potential impact of the TEPW, FEMA regions, States, and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) areas should conduct an annual Improvement Planning Workshop (IPW) in preparation for the TEPW. The Workshop provides a forum to review action items gleaned from the previous year's After Action Reports (AARs) and Improvement Plans (IPs), and facilitates priority identification that serves as the foundation for the Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan (TEP).

Prior to the IPW it is important attendees:

- Review their previous year's exercise and real-world event AAR/IPs
- Understand and are familiar with jurisdictional capabilities
- Prioritize outstanding corrective actions
- Come prepared to access capabilities and craft priorities that will drive training and exercise planning for the following year

FY 2009 State Improvement Planning Workshops should be held at least 30 days prior to the TEPW to allow jurisdictions time to refine materials developed at the Improvement Planning Workshop and to distribute them to workshop participants and TEPW invitees. FY 2009 FEMA Region IAPWs are scheduled for the November-December 2008 timeframe.

For additional information on Improvement Planning Workshops, please contact your respective FEMA Regional Exercise Manager at hseep@dhs.gov.

Training and Exercise Plan Workshop

The Training and Exercise Plan Workshop (TEPW) is an opportunity for a State or FEMA Region to discuss its strategy and develop a plan to increase preparedness through training and exercises, thus translating preparedness priorities into specific training and exercises. The effectiveness of the workshop depends largely on the conference attendees. Participants must be knowledgeable and have the authority to commit personnel and resources toward the activities scheduled in the multi-year plan. They must be able to make preparedness planning decisions for their respective directorates/agencies and be familiar with their corresponding jurisdictional priorities and associated Target Capabilities from the Target Capabilities List. It is recommended that States hold their FY 2009 TEPWs this Fall. FY 2009 FEMA Region TEPWs are scheduled for February - March 2009.

National Training and Exercise Conference Highlights

The National Preparedness Directorate (NPD) National Training and Exercise Conference, formerly known as the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) National Training and Exercise Conference, was held May 12-15, 2008 in Emmitsburg, Maryland. While EMI has hosted the conference since its inception more than 20 years ago, its agenda and audience have expanded to include training and exercise entities and stakeholders from across the preparedness community. The 4-day conference was designed to provide a review of current and proposed training and exercise programs within FEMA that are applicable to State and local partners.

The agenda accommodated training and exercise components within the NPD National Integration Center (NIC) such as the National Exercise Division (NED), Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), Incident Management Systems Integration (IMSI) Division, Training and Exercise Integration (TEI) Division, EMI, as well as the National Fire Academy. The agenda also included several presentations by regional and local training and exercise representatives. Conference sessions integrated topics such as the National Response Framework (NRF), National Incident Management Systems (NIMS), Lessons Learned and Best Practices from real world events, the National Exercise Program (NEP), updates on the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP), and many others.

Over 200 Federal, State, and local representatives from nearly all 56 states and territories attended the conference which provided an opportunity for participants to develop new relationships and share ideas, challenges, and learning experiences.

Training

Training and Exercise Integration Division Update

The Training and Exercise Integration (TEI) Division is taking an active role in supporting the current TCL effort, with a majority of TEI planning activities tied to the continued roll-out of the Target Capabilities List (TCL). The current TCL initiative is focused on simplifying the concept, and making it more implementation and user friendly. Through working groups and an advisory group, the TEI will focus on numerous initiatives in six areas:

Working Group 1: Occupational Specialties and Requirements

One initiative is the Professional Development Strategies to support each of the 37 Target Capabilities for 10 TEI Professional Categories.

Working Group 2: Standardize NPD Teaching-Learning Business Policy

An initiative is a consolidated course catalogue searchable by specialty and TCL.

Working Group 3: Integrate and Standardize NPD Training and Exercise Teaching-Learning IT Business Systems

An initiative includes a single sign-on /portal consolidation for professional development and personnel accountability.

Working Group 4: Establish an Integrated National and FEMA Improvement Management Program

The comparison of CAP and RAMP functions and suggestions for consolidation is one initiative of this working group.

Working Group 5: Establish a National Training Program

The vision for this area is to have a nation trained and capable of preparing for, protecting against, responding to, recovering from, or mitigating against all hazards whether natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made events.

Working Group 6: Establish a National Training and Exercise Control Center

Develop a strategy for the design and development of a National Training and Exercise Control Center is one of several initiatives for this working group.

Working Group 7: Regional TEI Integration

An initiative includes the development of a comprehensive training and exercise marketing and promotional strategy for FEMA Federal Preparedness Coordinators, FEMA Training and Exercise Specialists, State Administrative Agencies, State Training and Exercise Coordinators and the National Integration Center (NIC).

Technology

AAR Posting Update

In recent weeks, we received several inquires as to the specific location for posting After Action Reports/Improvement Plans (AARs/IPs). The DHS National Preparedness Directorate Information Bulletin No. 234, dated November 21, 2006, provides direction on this topic:

Per FY 05 and FY 06, Homeland Security Grant Program guidance, AAR/IPs should be uploaded to the library on the G& T Portal (successor to the ODP Portal) into the respective State folder. In addition, per FY 2007 and FY 2008, grant recipients must ensure an AAR/IP prepared for each exercise conducted with grant funds or direct support is submitted to the Portal within 60 days following completion of the exercise.

The ODP Secure Portal serves as the repository for AAR/IPS; however, AAR postings have been inconsistent. At times it has been difficult to locate AARs as many are posted in draft form and never finalized and posted outside the respective State folder. From time to time After Action Reports are posted under a name inconsistent with the exercise name shown in NEXS (e.g. County of Zoe AAA instead of FSE Operation Liftoff 2008 AAR).

As a result, to meet grant guidance the National Exercise Division requests AARs be posted as follows:

Homeland Security Grant Program Exercises & 2007 Direct Support Exercises:

- Post all outstanding AAR/IPs on the ODP Portal in the library's respective State folder, subfolder AAR/IPs, and the appropriate funding year (FY 2007, FY 2008) subfolder
- Make certain the AAR/IP name matches the exercise name in the National Exercise Schedule System (NEXS)
- Post AAR/IPs drafts in their *final* format
- Post AAR/IPs within 60 days of completion of the exercise
- Individuals assigned responsibility for AAR posting be given access to the appropriate State folder or an individual with access be assigned responsibility for the posting

FY 2008 DHS/FEMA Regional Exercise Support Program (RESP) Exercises:

- Post all AAR/IPs on the ODP Portal in the library's RESP (Regional Exercise Support Program) folder, in the respective FEMA Region's folder, and respective State folder
- Make certain the AAR/IP name matches the exercise name in the National Exercise Schedule System (NEXS)
- Post AAR/IPs drafts in their *final* format
- Post AAR/IPs within 60 days of completion of the exercise
- Individuals assigned responsibility for AAR posting be given access to the appropriate RESP folder or an individual with access be assigned responsibility for the posting

Is Your Exercise in NEXS?

The purpose of the Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan (TEP) is to develop and provide an exercise program based on capabilities-based planning and is a living document to be updated and refined annually. As such it provides a roadmap for each Region and State to address their respective priorities. The National Exercise Schedule System (NEXS) is the nation's online comprehensive tool that facilitates scheduling, de-confliction, and synchronization of all National-Level, Federal, State, and local exercises. It is located at hseep@dhs.gov.

The system provides a means for each agency/organization/entity to schedule an exercise and related activities with detailed information, (e.g. exercise name, location, dates, capabilities), thus enabling our Federal, State, and local partners to schedule all of future Training and Exercise Plan exercises in NEXS.

Here are some tips to help you schedule future exercises prior to a Concepts and Objectives Conference/Meeting:

- Temporary data is entered as a placeholder. For example, the first screen in creating an exercise requests an exercise name; the placeholder exercise name might be *TTX Region Z 2010*. The name can be revised when details are available.
- If the exercise conduct dates have not been determined, enter a temporary date and update it later.
- The exercise primary location will be the only location that is de-conflicted/synchronized. This might be the site of the command center or the simulation center.
- The lead element is a jurisdiction or government agency. The city/town/state's EOC site can be entered as a placeholder.
- The State and Regional Training and Exercise Plans provide the focus for a possible scenario. Likely target capabilities, such as communications and onsite incident management, can serve as placeholders.
- As planning progresses, update NEXS with the information as it becomes available. This will provide greater visibility of your exercise for scheduling, synchronization, de-confliction, and planning purposes.

The use of NEXS placeholders enables initial relevant exercise activities. By inputting exercise data early in the system, it allows other jurisdiction/agency/organizations to collaborate and build upon a scheduled exercise. The "owners" or lead agency of the exercise have the responsibility of scheduling the event in NEXS (e.g. an EPA exercise should be placed in NEXS by an EPA representative).

All exercises identified in State and Regional Training and Exercise Plans should be placed in NEXS. For State and Regional TEPWs held prior to April 2008 all exercises should already be in NEXS, including those with temporary data. Workshops completed March – May have until July 31, 2008 to schedule their multi-year exercises in the system.

Exercise Support

Regional Exercise Support Program Extension

The National Preparedness Goal envisions a national preparedness system in which all entities have target levels of capability in place and can effectively communicate and coordinate resources. Implementing such a system is a complex undertaking. To guide implementation, measurable national priorities are to be achieved, including an overarching priority to strengthen regionally-based preparedness. In January, the National Exercise Division, in partnership with FEMA Regional Officers, announced the implementation of the Regional Exercise Support Program (RESP). This marked a shift in strategy from a State-focused approach to a regional (multi-state) approach to more effectively integrate national, regional, territorial, tribal, state, and local preparedness exercises. Direct support, in the form of vendor assistance, is provided to help with the design and development, conduct, and evaluation of exercises in accordance with HSEEP. Direct support is also available to help conduct FEMA Regional Training and Exercise Plan Workshops (T&EPWs) and to instruct the HSEEP Mobile Training Course.

As of June 6, 2008, the period of performance for all RESP support contracts was extended to December 31, 2008 to ensure ongoing regional exercise initiatives have adequate time to be planned, developed, executed, and evaluated in a manner consistent with HSEEP guidance.

For additional information regarding details of the RESP extension, please contact your FEMA National Exercise Division Regional Exercise Manager.

HSEEP Guidelines verses HSEEP Compliance

What does it mean to comply with HSEEP guidelines? Is this different than being HSEEP compliant? What exactly is a guideline and what is a mandated practice for exercise program management?

First, HSEEP methodology can be applied to all levels of exercises – Federal, State, or local. However, only those jurisdictions or entities that receive grant funds to conduct exercises through the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) are required to follow the guidance found in HSEEP Volume I-III. Federal exercises conducted as part of the Homeland Security Council's National Exercise Program (NEP) are also required to follow these HSEEP guidelines.

Examples of an entity complying with *HSEEP guidelines* include:

- The exercise utilizes a "building block approach" in which a cycle of exercises gradually escalate in complexity
- The design, conduct, and evaluation are based on a capabilities-based approach
- The project adheres to exercise planning timelines
- Scenarios are based on the entity's risk/vulnerability assessment and tailored toward validating capabilities, tasks, and objectives contained within the Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs)
- Created documents conform to the guidelines and templates provided in the HSEEP volumes
- Exercise conduct reflects the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- Findings and recommendations from the draft After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) are presented to key personnel and the exercise planning team at an After Action Conference (AAC)
- Corrective Actions included in the improvement plan are measurable

The previous HSEEP newsletter (Spring 2008) addressed the term *HSEEP compliant*. *HSEEP compliance* is defined as adherence to specific HSEEP-mandated practices for exercise program management, design, development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. Essentially, in order for an entity to be considered HSEEP compliant, an entity must satisfy four distinct *performance* requirements:

1. *Training and Exercise Plan Workshop*: All HSEEP compliant entities must conduct a Training and Exercise Plan Workshop (T&EPW) each calendar year in which they develop a Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan which includes the entities' training and exercise priorities. The plan must also include a multi-year training and exercise schedule.
2. *Exercise Planning and Conduct*: The type of exercise selected should be consistent with the entity's Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan.
3. *After-Action Reporting*: Following each exercise, an AAR/IP must be developed and submitted in a proper report format (as found in HSEEP Volume III).
4. *Improvement Planning*: Corrective Actions identified in the AAR/IP must be tracked and implemented (e.g. designated start date and completion date and a point of contact and organization assigned to the action).

Exercise Operational Updates

TOPOFF 4 - A Number of Firsts

The TOPOFF 4 (T4) Full-Scale Exercise (FSE), which took place October 15-19, 2007, involved close to 23,000 participants from all levels of government with components of prevention, response, and recovery pertaining to the threat and detonation of a radiological dispersal device (RDD). T4 pulled from lessons learned from previous exercises and real-world events and was the first exercise conducted under the new National Exercise Program. Unlike previous TOPOFF exercises, all venues focused on one scenario/hazard - the threat and detonation of a Radiological Dispersion/Dispersal Device (RDD). Additional differences from previous TOPOFF exercises included an expanded prevention component of the exercise and the enhanced role of the Department of Defense, specifically the Defense Support to Civil Authorities.

Participants engaged in various activities as part of a robust, full-scale simulated response to a multi-faceted threat, and addressed policy and strategic issues that mobilized prevention and response systems and required participants to make difficult decisions, carry out essential functions, and challenged their ability to maintain a common operating picture during an incident of national significance.

The exercise provided the opportunity to address issues ranging from the White House to the fire chief at an incident site. For some jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations, the exercise produced a number of *firsts*:

- Operating within a Joint Field Office (JFO)
- Integrating a state EOC into an Interim Operating Facility (IOF)
- Activating a Business Operations Center (BOC) with participation from hundreds of private sector organizations
- Coordinating an integrated response across drastic time-zones and transportation challenges
- Exercising specialized resources and launching new automated programs
- Utilizing mutual aid for Civil Support Teams and integrating such teams throughout multiple operational periods.
- Implementing a large-scale public information campaign
- Working along-side Federal agencies
- Exercising Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs)
- Participation by an entire state in a TOPOFF exercise with all county EOCs opened
- Engaging all acute care hospitals (84) within a state
- Involvement of a US Territory in a national-level exercise
- Develop new and long-lasting working relationships

National Level Exercise 2-08 Overview

The National Level Exercise 2-08 (NLE 2-08), conducted May 1-8, 2008, was a Tier II exercise and became a compilation of three major exercises:

- FEMA's National Continuity Program's Eagle Horizon
- U.S. Northern Command's (NORTHCOM) Ardent Sentry 2008
- FEMA Disaster Operation's Hurricane Preparedness Exercise (HPE)

During the period of May 1-6, the focus was a response to terrorist events and pre-impact posture for hurricane "Zoe". May 7th - 8th focused on continuity capabilities and hurricane

preparedness and response. Interagency continued its response to previous threats as well as a credible and imminent threat to the National Capital Region.

Departments and agencies with active exercise audiences will provide excerpts of their After Action Reviews (AARs). The National Exercise Division (NED) will then draft an overarching AAR document focusing on interagency coordination, incorporating their inputs as annexes. NED will draft an Annex specifically addressing the National Simulation Cell (SIMCELL). Following an interagency review of the preliminary draft, and small-scale After Action Conference (AAC) will be scheduled.

Election Cycle Transition Exercise and Training Series

Pursuant to the Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 8 and Homeland Security Act of 2002, the National Exercise Division (NED) was designed as the executive agent of the National Exercise Program (NEP). One component of the NEP is a quadrennial transition training program. For fiscal years that include a Presidential election, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with the heads of other relevant departments and agencies, recommend a cycle of NEP events designed to introduce new and transitioning heads of departments and agencies and other key officials to existing policies, plans, and capabilities, as well as possible shortfalls in those policies, plans and capabilities based on strategic estimates of threat and risk. The 2009 transition to a new administration of this election cycle is particularly important as this is the first transfer of power since the 9/11 era.

The Election Cycle Transition Exercise & Training Series is an 18-month series of briefings, seminars, and exercises for senior officials of incoming Administration. The series addresses:

- U.S. Government policies, plans, and capabilities
- Incident Management and crisis coordination procedures and challenges

One of the goals of the program is to motivate intense, early intervention between heads of departments and agencies and the emergency program staff who will support them within their organizations.

The program, which will utilize HSEEP methodology, focuses on the responsibilities and authorities with a specific tie to the National Response Framework, the National Incident Management System, and other pertinent plans and policies.

2008 Hurricane Preparedness Series

According to the National Weather Service's projected climate conditions for the 2008 hurricane season, which began June 1, is anticipated to be a near normal or above normal hurricane season in the Atlantic basin. However the respite from devastating severe hurricanes such as Rita, Katrina and Wilma that occurred in 2005 should not cause the nation, especially the coastal communities, to drop their guard and decrease hurricane preparedness and response activities.

The 2008 Hurricane Preparedness Exercise (HPE) Series was led by FEMA and delivered through its Regions (I, II, III, IV, VI & IX), and conducted with its Federal, State, local, tribal and territorial partners, in an effort to ensure that the nations most hurricane prone areas maintain and improve their level of hurricane preparedness and response. The 2008 HPE series focused on unified hurricane preparedness and response by synchronizing state, local, tribal and territorial hurricane plans with the federal concept of operations for

hurricanes. In full partnership with the FEMA Disaster Operations Directorate, the national 2008 Hurricane Preparedness Program consisted of revision of Hurricane Preparedness Plans, plan synchronization workshops, and pre-and post-landfall Tabletop Exercises (TTXs).

FEMA R-III participated in the National Level Exercise 2-08 in early May as the Mid-Atlantic hurricane preparedness component. As a result, they validated their national hurricane preparedness and response efforts by testing objectives and their national, state, local and tribal coordination and synchronization. Their exercise play was based on the simulated Category 4 "Zoe" hurricane tracked to make land-fall on the border of Region III and Region IV. Lessons learned were used to amend hurricane plans in preparation for the 2008 hurricane season.

Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator, said "Planning and preparation is the key to storm survival and recovery." The 2008 HPE Series helps hurricane prone areas become more prepared to address severe weather and other types of emergencies.

Diablo Bravo 08

Diablo Bravo-08, a Tier II Operations-Based exercise with elements of both a Functional Exercise (FE) and a Full Scale Exercise (FSE), will be conducted from July 28 to August 1, 2008 and will exercise the National Response Framework. The scenario, intended to drive interaction between all participating departments and agencies responding to the incident will be supported by a Multiple Events Exercise List (MSEL) from both the National and Regional Simulation Cells (SIMCELLS). The exercise concept was developed to satisfy National Security Presidential Directive-28; the National Nuclear Security Administration has committed to conduct a nuclear weapon exercise every 5 years.

Diablo Bravo 08 exercise objectives include:

- Validate the capability of emergency response assets to safely mitigate an incident involving a U.S. nuclear weapon in DOE custody
- Examine the roles and responsibilities under the NWAPP, department and agency mutual aid agreements, and other national level doctrine governing the response to a U.S. nuclear weapon incident
- Assess the real-time deployment of emergency response assets and resources
- Establish and coordinate activities within a National Security Area (NSA)

DHS/FEMA will coordinate interagency participation in National and Regional SIMCELLS. A SIMCELL e-mail address has been developed and will be distributed for use during the exercise. Other Federal agencies are providing field assets to support the exercise.

For additional information on the Diablo Bravo 08 please contact Bill Windle at william.windle@dhs.gov.

Empire 09

Empire 2009 is a Department of Energy-sponsored exercise which will be conducted in upstate New York next spring and has been designated as a Tier II exercise under the National Exercise Program.

The Concept and Objectives Conference was held in February and the Initial Planning Conference was held in May with the Mid-term Planning Conference scheduled for this Fall.

The Exercise Directive has been reviewed by the Department of Homeland Security and is being sent to inter-agency partners for review before it will be approved and released by the Preparedness Directorate. Working Groups are being formed and meetings will begin this Summer.

For more information regarding Empire 09, please contact Phil Serrin at phillip.serrin1@dhs.gov, or Rebecca Bean at rebecca.bean@dhs.gov with the National Exercise Division.

Terrorism Prevention Exercise Program (TPEP)

The draft *HSEEP Prevention Exercises* was posted to *LLIS.gov* in early Spring and made available for feedback and comments. Based on the feedback received, several recommended revisions are being addressed. In particular, the guidance on Prevention Exercise Red Teaming is being reviewed. Over the next year, the Terrorism Prevention Exercise Program (TPEP) will continue the ongoing development and refinement of various tools, to include a comprehensive Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) Library to provide stakeholders with a baseline template for creating prevention exercise scenarios.

The TPEP has spent more than three years gathering best practices and lessons learned from, and developing tools and methodologies for prevention exercises for the Federal, State, tribal and local communities. The tools and methodologies in *HSEEP Prevention Exercises* were employed in multiple exercises, from locally-oriented discussion-based exercises to the operations-based Prevention Component of TOPOFF 4. The lessons learned became the foundation for *HSEEP Prevention Exercises* and serve to provide the groundwork for the National community to conduct prevention exercises within a common, effective format and structure.

For more information regarding *HSEEP Prevention Exercises* or the TPEP, please contact TPEP@dhs.gov.

Best Practices/ Success Stories Spotlight

Commonwealth of Virginia's Approach to Building a Series of Exercises

An effective exercise program involves a collaborative approach that integrates the resources of various agencies, organizations, and individuals from both government agencies and the private sector. Using a scenario that supports an identified risk, an exercise series is designed to validate and evaluate existing capabilities and the many facets of preparedness, response, or recovery.

The Commonwealth of Virginia (Region III) recently used a unique approach to their statewide exercise. The Virginia Emergency Response Team exercise (VERTEX), mandated by the Commonwealth of Virginia General Assembly, occurs annually and requires the participation of at least one locality in each of the Commonwealth's regions. It is designed to develop training objectives, practical skills and coordination with supporting organizations.

In previous years, VERTEX was a single day exercise; last year VERTEX 2007 expanded to a multi-day exercise. This year, VERTEX is comprised of a series of twelve different exercises and drills to address various elements of the state's response plans.

VERTEX 2008 began March 20 with a tabletop exercise to examine the response to an ice storm with widespread power outages. Remaining exercises, held over the course of several

months, addressed topics such as evacuation and sheltering planning and coordination, distribution of supplies, a reversal of I-64, legal issues in emergencies, radiological response and pandemic influenza. Of note, Virginia partnered with Wal-Mart and the Nestle Corporation and FEMA's Logistical Response Center to conduct a point of distribution (POD) exercise in two major Virginia jurisdictions. A third POD exercise is planned for later this year to examine resupply and sustainment of the state's eastern shore jurisdictions.

The Virginia Fusion Center also participated in an Area Maritime Security Tabletop Exercise with the US Navy's Center of Asymmetric Warfare and will participate in Noble Resolve, a U.S. Northern Command sponsored exercise in July. During each exercise, response personnel from state, local government, volunteer groups and private industry role-play their emergency operations functions in order to review and practice the skills needed during an actual emergency.

One After Action Report and Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) will analyze exercise results, recognize strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and recommend corrective actions.

Feedback

HSEEP Support and Help Desk Contact Information

The National Exercise Division encourages user feedback, comments, and suggestions as we continue to develop and improve HSEEP initiatives. If you have an interesting HSEEP story or one that supports best practices, please send your story to the HSEEP Help Desk (HSEEP@dhs.gov) for publication consideration. In addition, please contact the HSEEP Help Desk with any feedback, comments, or questions. Additional information can be found on the HSEEP website (<https://hseep.dhs.gov>).

Thank you for your continued support.