



Why This Matters

Every two years, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) carries out a National-Level Exercise aimed at assessing the U.S. capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a large-scale disaster. FEMA can improve its disaster management operations by better managing, tracking, and validating corrective actions stemming from exercises and actual events, and widely disseminating lessons learned.

DHS Response

FEMA concurred with all three recommendations.

FEMA acknowledges that the Management Directive needs to be revised and will determine an appropriate steering committee organization to provide internal FEMA oversight of corrective actions and lessons learned and update all associated Directives as appropriate. FEMA is developing a new doctrine/policy that standardizes the corrective actions and lessons learned processes which should be completed by August 2012. FEMA indicated that validation of completed corrective actions and timely sharing of lessons learned will be addressed in the new doctrine/policy.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202)254-4100, or email us at DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov

FEMA's Management of Corrective Actions and Lessons Learned from National-Level Exercises

What We Determined

FEMA's National-Level Exercises are used to assess the nation's capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a large-scale disaster. In April 2007, FEMA established the National Preparedness Directorate to oversee the coordination and development of strategies to prepare for both manmade and natural disasters. As a result of our review, we identified areas for improvement.

FEMA did not provide clear guidance to track and manage corrective actions assigned to them or prioritize their completion, nor did FEMA sufficiently disseminate its agency-specific lessons learned. By not completing and validating corrective actions and not widely disseminating agency-lessons learned, FEMA missed opportunities to gain knowledge from the experiences of its personnel and improve its disaster management operations.

Convening regular meetings of the Exercise and Evaluation Program Steering Committee would help FEMA better track and manage corrective actions and ensure their completion in a timely manner. Moreover, by finalizing and implementing the Remedial Action Management Program/Correct Manual, FEMA can more effectively track, manage, complete, and validate corrective actions and better disseminate agency-specific lessons learned.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Deputy Administrator, National Preparedness Directorate:

- 1) Revise Federal Emergency Management Agency Exercise and Evaluation Program Management Directive 123-15 to reflect the current organizational structure and ensure that the Exercise and Evaluation Program Steering Committee meets regularly.
- 2) Finalize, issue, and implement a Remedial Action Management Program/Corrective Action Program Manual that standardizes the corrective actions and lessons learned processes and provides a clear delineation of all participants' roles and responsibilities.
- 3) Ensure that completed corrective actions are validated through exercises or actual events and, once validated, are submitted in a timely manner to the Lessons Learned Information Sharing website.