Unit 2: Comprehensive Exercise Program
Introduction

In any discussion of emergency preparedness, the emphasis is on a comprehensive exercise program, made up of progressively complex exercises, each one building on the previous one, until the exercises are as close to reality as possible. This unit provides an overview of five main types of exercise activities that make up a comprehensive exercise program.

Unit 2 Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the basic components of a comprehensive exercise program.
- Explain the importance of designing a comprehensive and progressive exercise program to meet the needs of your organization or community.

Progressive Exercising

A progressive program has several important characteristics:

- The exercise program involves the efforts and participation of various entities—whether departments, organizations, or agencies. Through the involvement of multiple entities, the program allows the involved organizations to test, not only their implementation of emergency management procedures, but their coordination with each other in the process.
- The program is carefully planned to achieve identified goals.
- It is made up of a series of increasingly complex exercises.
- Each successive exercise builds upon the previous one until mastery is achieved.
Progressive Exercising (Continued)

Broad Commitment

When a community or an organization engages in a progressive exercise program, the program needs to be comprehensive. A community program must consider every type of responding agency and organization in the community.

Communities are composed of more than police, fire, and public works. The following entities have requirements to exercise as well:

- Hospitals
- Airports, chemical, and nuclear facilities, and other regulated organizations
- Volunteer agencies and organizations in the private sector that contribute services, materials, and personnel to the response and recovery effort
- Work sites—public or private—that may be vulnerable to significant emergency events

A progressive exercise program, therefore, requires a commitment from various agencies and organizations to participate in increasingly challenging exercises over a period of time, in order to address the larger emergency management system rather than a single problem.

The same is true when a single organization engages in a progressive exercise program. It must consider the role of each department and each function that will be involved in responding to and recovering from an emergency event, and it must secure the commitment of all of those elements to a sequence of progressive internal and external exercises that will build a coordinated, effective response.

Careful Planning

Exercises require careful planning around clearly identified goals. Only through identifying exercise goals, then designing, developing, conducting, and analyzing the results can those who are responsible for emergency operations be sure of what works—and what does not.
Progressive Exercising (Continued)

**Increasing Complexity**

Exercises should be organized to increase in complexity—for example, from tabletop discussions to functional exercises to a full-scale exercise. Each type of exercise builds on previous exercises using more sophisticated simulation techniques and requiring more preparation time, personnel, and planning.

Rushing into a full-scale exercise too quickly can open the door to potential failure because shortfalls have not been identified through less complicated and expensive exercises.

**Success Breeds Success**

An important advantage of building incrementally to a full-scale exercise is that successful exercise experiences breed new successes:

- Officials and stakeholders are more willing to commit resources.
- Personnel are more motivated and look forward to the next exercise.
- Confidence increases.
- Operating skills improve.

**Who Participates?**

For a community-wide exercise program, the jurisdiction determines what agencies, organizations, and stakeholders participate in each exercise. Participants are further determined by the nature and size of the exercise. Larger exercises would include all of the participants who would have responsibilities in a real emergency. Smaller exercises, which focus on a limited aspect of the emergency plan, would limit the participants.
Who Participates? (Continued)

The same is true of exercises conducted by a particular organization. For example, let’s look at the case of a beer or soft drink bottler that during disasters converts its production line over to bottling water for mass care. This organization might design exercises to test procedures for:

- Coordination with jurisdiction officials.
- Managerial decision making on when to convert, how much of the line to convert, and when to convert back.
- Internal notifications.
- Line personnel responsibilities.
- Temporary facility changes.
- Coordination with suppliers.
- Product distribution.
- Transitioning back to regular production.
- Documentation.

In either case—whether the exercises involve an entire community or a more limited population—the nature of the exercise somewhat determines the participants. On one end of the spectrum, a tabletop exercise might involve only key decision makers. An exercise to test particular functions would limit its participants to those functions. And a full-scale exercise might involve the entire community or the whole facility.

Some types of exercises have additional participant requirements. For example, a functional exercise involves not only players but simulators, controllers, and evaluators.
What Activities Are Included?

There are five main types of activities in a comprehensive exercise program:

- Orientation seminar
- Drill
- Tabletop exercise
- Functional exercise
- Full-scale exercise

As we have discussed, these activities build from simple to complex, from narrow to broad, from least expensive to most costly to implement, from theoretical to realistic. When carefully planned to achieve specified objectives and goals, this progression of exercise activities provides an important element of an integrated emergency preparedness system.

Orientation Seminar

Purpose

As the name suggests, the orientation seminar is an overview or introduction. Its purpose is to familiarize participants with roles, plans, procedures, or equipment. It can also be used to resolve questions of coordination and assignment of responsibilities.

Characteristics

Key characteristics of the orientation seminar are summarized in the table on the next page.
### Orientation Seminar Characteristics

| **Format** | The orientation seminar is a very low-stress event, usually presented as an informal discussion in a group setting. There is little or no simulation. (For this reason, orientations do not qualify as FEMA-recognized exercises.) A variety of seminar formats can be used, including:
|---|---|
| | - Lecture.
| | - Discussion.
| | - Slide or video presentation.
| | - Computer demonstration.
| | - Panel discussion.
| | - Guest lecturers. |

| **Applications** | The orientation seminar can be used for a wide variety of purposes, including:
|---|---|
| | - Discussing a topic or problem in a group setting.
| | - Introducing something new (e.g., policies and plans).
| | - Explaining existing plans to new people (e.g., newly elected officials or executives need an explanation of the EOP and their role at the EOC; new employees need an orientation to operational plans as they relate to emergencies).
| | - Introducing a cycle of exercises or preparing participants for success in more complex exercises.
| | - Motivating people for participation in subsequent exercises. |

| **Leadership** | Orientations are led by a facilitator, who presents information and guides discussion. The facilitator should have some leadership skills, but very little other training is required. |

| **Participants** | A seminar may be cross-functional—involving one or two participants for each function or service being discussed (e.g., management, policy, coordination, and operations staff). Or, it may be geared to several people from a single agency or department. |

| **Facilities** | A conference room or any other fixed facility may be used, depending on the purposes of the orientation. |

| **Time** | Orientations should last a maximum of 1 to 2 hours. |

| **Preparation** | An orientation is quite simple to prepare (two weeks’ preparation time is usually sufficient) and conduct. Participants need no previous training. |
What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

Conducting an Orientation

There are no cut-and-dried rules for an effective orientation; its purpose will determine its format. Below are a few helpful guidelines for conducting a seminar.

Orientation Seminar Guidelines

- **Be creative.** You can use various discussion and presentation methods. Think of interesting classes that you have attended in other subjects, and borrow the techniques of good teachers and presenters. For example, you might call on people one by one to give ideas, plan a panel discussion, hold a brainstorming session, present case studies for problem solving, or give an illustrated lecture.

- **Get organized and plan ahead.** Even though orientation seminars are less complex than other activities, it is no time to “wing it.”

- **Be ready to facilitate a successful orientation seminar.** Discourage long tirades, keep exchanges crisp and to the point, focus on the subject at hand, and help everyone feel good about being there.

Drills

**Purpose**

A drill is a coordinated, supervised exercise activity, normally used to test a single specific operation or function. With a drill, there is no attempt to coordinate organizations or fully activate the EOC. Its role in an exercise program is to practice and perfect one small part of the response plan and help prepare for more extensive exercises, in which several functions will be coordinated and tested. The effectiveness of a drill is its focus on a single, relatively limited portion of the overall emergency management system. It makes possible a tight focus on a potential problem area.

**Characteristics**

Key characteristics of drills are summarized in the table on the next page.
What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drill Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Applications** | Drills are used to test a specific operation. They are also used to provide training with new equipment, to develop new policies or procedures, or to practice and maintain current skills. Drills are a routine part of the daily job and organizational training in the field, in a facility, or at the EOC. Some examples of drills run by different organizations are listed below:  
  - EOC: Call down procedures  
  - Public works: Locating and placing road barriers under time constraints  
  - Public health and safety: Site assessment and sampling  
  - Red Cross: Locating specific types of blood within a time constraint  
  - Military: Activation and mobilization drill  
  - Airport: Fire Department response to the furthest part of a runway within a given time  
  - Chemical plant: Evacuation and isolation of spill area and valve system shutoff  
  - Private sector resource provider: Warehouse readiness drill |
| **Leadership** | A drill can be led by a manager, supervisor, department head, or exercise designer. Staff must have a good understanding of the single function being tested. |
| **Participants** | The number of participants depends on the function being tested. Coordination, operations, and response personnel could be included. |
| **Facilities** | Drills can be conducted within a facility, in the field, or at the EOC or other operating center. |
| **Time** | ½ to 2 hours is usually required. |
| **Preparation** | Drills are one of the easiest kinds of exercise activities to design. Preparation may take about a month. Participants usually need a short orientation beforehand. |
What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

**Conducting a Drill**

How a drill is conducted varies according to the *type* of drill—ranging from simple operational procedures to more elaborate communication and command post drills. For example, a command post drill would require participants to report to the drill site, where a “visual narrative” would be displayed in the form of a mock emergency. Equipment, such as vans, command boards, and other needed supplies would be made available.

Given the variety of functions that may be drilled, there is no set way to run a drill. However, some general guidelines are given below.

---

**Drill Guidelines**

- **Prepare.** If operational procedures are to be tested, review them beforehand. Review safety precautions.

- **Set the stage.** It’s always good to begin with a general briefing, which sets the scene and reviews the drill purpose and objectives. Some designers like to set the scene using films, slides, or videotapes.

- **Monitor the action.** After a drill has been started, it will usually continue under its own steam. If you find that something you wanted to happen is not happening, however, you might want to insert a message to trigger that action. (We’ll learn more about messages later on.)
What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

**Tabletop Exercise**

**Purpose**

A *tabletop exercise* is a facilitated analysis of an emergency situation in an informal, stress-free environment. It is designed to elicit constructive discussion as participants examine and resolve problems based on existing operational plans and identify where those plans need to be refined. The success of the exercise is largely determined by group participation in the identification of problem areas.

**Characteristics**

There is minimal attempt at simulation in a tabletop exercise. Equipment is not used, resources are not deployed, and time pressures are not introduced. Key characteristics of the tabletop exercise are summarized in the table on the next page. We will discuss how to conduct a tabletop exercise in Unit 5.

An example of a tabletop exercise is provided in the Tool Box, available at [http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/priv/g139.htm](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/priv/g139.htm).
What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

Tabletop Exercise Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>The exercise begins with the reading of a short narrative, which sets the stage for the hypothetical emergency. Then, the facilitator may stimulate discussion in two ways:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Problem statements: Problem statements (describing major or detailed events) may be addressed either to individual participants or to participating departments or agencies. Recipients of problem statements then discuss the actions they might take in response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Simulated messages: These messages are more specific than problem statements. Again, the recipients discuss their responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In either case, the discussion generated by the problem focuses on roles (how the participants would respond in a real emergency), plans, coordination, the effect of decisions on other organizations, and similar concerns. Often maps, charts, and packets of materials are used to add to the realism of the exercise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Tabletop exercises have several important applications. They:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lend themselves to low-stress discussion of coordination and policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide a good environment for problem solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide an opportunity for key agencies and stakeholders to become acquainted with one another, their interrelated roles, and their respective responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide good preparation for a functional exercise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Leadership      | A facilitator leads the tabletop discussion. This person decides who gets a message or problem statement, calls on others to participate, asks questions, and guides the participants toward sound decisions. |

| Participants    | The objectives of the exercise dictate who should participate. The exercise can involve many people and many organizations—essentially anyone who can learn from or contribute to the planned discussion items. This may include all entities that have a policy, planning, or response role. |

| Facilities      | A tabletop exercise requires a large conference room where participants can surround a table.                   |

| Time            | A tabletop exercise usually lasts from 1 to 4 hours but can be longer. Discussion times are open-ended, and participants are encouraged to take their time in arriving at in-depth decisions—without time pressure. When the time is up, the activity is concluded. Although the facilitator maintains an awareness of time allocation for each area of discussion, the group does not have to complete every item in order for the exercise to be a success. |

| Preparation     | It typically takes about a month to prepare for a tabletop exercise. Preparation also usually requires at least one orientation and sometimes one or more drills. |
What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

**Functional Exercises**

**Purpose**

A **functional exercise** is a *fully simulated interactive exercise that tests the capability of an organization to respond to a simulated event*. The exercise tests multiple functions of the organization’s operational plan. It is a coordinated response to a situation in a time-pressured, realistic simulation.

**Characteristics**

A functional exercise focuses on the coordination, integration, and interaction of an organization’s policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities before, during, or after the simulated event. Key characteristics of a functional exercise are summarized in the following table. We will discuss how to conduct a functional exercise in Unit 6.

An example of a functional exercise is provided in the Tool Box, available at [http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/priv/g139.htm](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/priv/g139.htm).
## Functional Exercise Characteristics

| Format | This is an *interactive* exercise—similar to a full-scale exercise without the equipment. It simulates an incident in the most *realistic* manner possible short of moving resources to an actual site. A functional exercise is:

- *Geared for policy, coordination, and operations personnel*—the “players” in the exercise—who practice responding in a realistic way to carefully planned and sequenced messages given to them by “simulators.” The messages reflect ongoing events and problems that might actually occur in a real emergency.

- *A stressful* exercise because players respond in real time, with on-the-spot decisions and actions. All of the participants’ decisions and actions generate real responses and consequences from other players.

- *Complex*—Messages must be carefully scripted to cause participants to make decisions and act on them. This complexity makes the functional exercise difficult to design. |

| Applications | Functional exercises make it possible to test several functions and exercise several agencies or departments without incurring the cost of a full-scale exercise. A functional exercise is always a prerequisite to a full-scale exercise. In some instances, taking part in a functional exercise may serve as a full-scale exercise for a participating organization (e.g., a hospital may conduct its own full-scale exercise as part of a community-based functional exercise). |

| Leadership and Participants | Functional exercises are complex in their organization of leadership and the assignment of roles. The following general roles are used:

- **Controller:** Manages and directs the exercise

- **Players:** Participants who respond as they would in a real emergency (Players should include policy makers; may include coordinators and operational personnel directing field activities.)

- **Simulators:** Assume external roles and deliver planned messages to the players

- **Evaluators:** Observers who assess performance |

| Facilities | It is usually conducted in the EOC or other operating center. Ideally, people gather where they would actually operate in an emergency. Players and simulators are often seated in separate areas or rooms. Realism is achieved by the use of telephones, radios, televisions, and maps. |
## What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

### Functional Exercise Characteristics (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>A functional exercise requires from 3 to 8 hours, although it can run a full day or even longer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Plan on 6 to 18 months or more to prepare for a functional exercise, for several reasons:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Staff members need considerable experience with the functions being tested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The exercise should be preceded by lower-level exercises, as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The controller, evaluators, and simulators require training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The exercise may require a significant allocation of resources and a major commitment from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>organizational leaders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

Full-Scale Exercise

Purpose

A full-scale exercise simulates a real event as closely as possible. It is an exercise designed to evaluate the operational capability of emergency management systems in a highly stressful environment that simulates actual response conditions. To accomplish this realism, it requires the mobilization and actual movement of emergency personnel, equipment, and resources. Ideally, the full-scale exercise should test and evaluate most functions of the emergency management plan or operational plan.

Characteristics

A full-scale exercise differs from a drill in that it coordinates the actions of several entities, tests several emergency functions, and activates the EOC or other operating center. Realism is achieved through:

- On-scene actions and decisions.
- Simulated “victims.”
- Search and rescue requirements.
- Communication devices.
- Equipment deployment.
- Actual resource and personnel allocation.

Key characteristics of full-scale exercises are summarized in the table on the next page. We will discuss how to conduct a full-scale exercise in Unit 7.

An example of a full-scale exercise is provided in the Tool Box, available at http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/priv/g139.htm.
What Activities Are Included? (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full-Scale Exercise Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The exercise begins with a description of the event, communicated to responders in the same manner as would occur in a real event. Personnel conducting the field component must proceed to their assigned locations, where they see a “visual narrative” in the form of a mock emergency (e.g., a plane crash with victims, a “burning” building, a simulated chemical spill on a highway, or a terrorist attack). From then on, actions taken at the scene serve as input to the simulation taking place at the EOC or operating center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applications</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-scale exercises are the ultimate in the testing of functions—the “trial by fire.” Because they are expensive and time consuming, it is important that they be reserved for the highest priority hazards and functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership and Participants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more controllers manage the exercise, and evaluators are required. All levels of personnel take part in a full-scale exercise:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Policy personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coordination personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Operations personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Field personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The event unfolds in a realistic setting (e.g., a plane crash at an airport, a terrorist attack at a public venue). The EOC or other operating center is activated, and field command posts may be established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A full-scale exercise may be designed to be as short as 2 to 4 hours, or to last as long as 1 or more days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for a full-scale exercise requires an extensive investment of time, effort, and resources—1 to 1½ years to develop a complete exercise package. This timeframe includes multiple drills and preparatory tabletop and functional exercises. In addition, personnel and equipment from participating agencies must be committed for a prolonged period of time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the Five Activities

Each of the five activities just described plays an important part in the overall exercise program. The following chart lists some of reasons for conducting each type of activity. Key characteristics of each type of exercise are shown in the table on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Drill</th>
<th>Tabletop Exercise</th>
<th>Functional Exercise</th>
<th>Full-Scale Exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No previous exercise</td>
<td>Assess equipment capabilities</td>
<td>Practice group problem solving</td>
<td>Evaluate a function</td>
<td>Assess and improve information analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No recent operations</td>
<td>Test response time</td>
<td>Promote executive familiarity with emergency management plan</td>
<td>Observe physical facilities use</td>
<td>Assess and improve interagency cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New plan</td>
<td>Personnel training</td>
<td>Assess plan coverage for a specific case study</td>
<td>Reinforce established policies and procedures</td>
<td>Support policy formulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New procedures</td>
<td>Assess interagency cooperation</td>
<td>Assess plan coverage for a specific risk area</td>
<td>Assess hospital preparedness</td>
<td>Assess negotiation procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New staff, leadership</td>
<td>Verify resource and staffing capabilities</td>
<td><strong>Examine staffing contingencies</strong></td>
<td>Test seldom-used resources</td>
<td>Test resource and personnel allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New nuclear facility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Measure resource adequacy</td>
<td>Direct media attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New industrial risk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Test group message interpretation</td>
<td>Assess and strengthen inter-jurisdictional or interorganizational relations</td>
<td>Assess and strengthen interjurisdictional or interorganizational relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assess interagency or interdepartmental coordination</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assess personnel and equipment locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Observe information sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Test equipment capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Train personnel in negotiation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the Five Activities (Continued)

**Key Characteristics**

The following table briefly compares the key characteristics of the five types of exercise program activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Drill</th>
<th>Tabletop Exercise</th>
<th>Functional Exercise</th>
<th>Full-Scale Exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal discussion in group setting Various presentation methods</td>
<td>Actual field or facility response Actual equipment</td>
<td>Narrative presentation Problem statements or simulated messages Group discussion No time pressures</td>
<td>Interactive, complex Players respond to messages (events/problems) provided by simulators. Realistic but no actual equipment. Conducted in real time; stressful</td>
<td>Realistic event announcement Personnel gather at assigned site Visual narrative (enactment) Actions at scene serve as input to EOC simulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Manager, supervisor, department head, or designer</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Controller</td>
<td>Controller(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Single agency/department, or cross-functional Personnel for the function being tested May include coordination, operations, response personnel</td>
<td>Anyone with a policy, planning, or response role for the type of situation used</td>
<td>Players (policy, coordination, and operations personnel) Simulators Evaluators</td>
<td>All levels of personnel (policy, coordination, operations, field) Evaluators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Conference room</td>
<td>Facility, field, or EOC</td>
<td>Large conference room</td>
<td>EOC or other operating center (multiple rooms)</td>
<td>Realistic setting EOC or other operating center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1–2 hours</td>
<td>½–2 hours</td>
<td>1–4 hours or longer</td>
<td>3–8 hours or longer</td>
<td>2 hours to 1 or more days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the Five Activities (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Drill</th>
<th>Tabletop Exercise</th>
<th>Functional Exercise</th>
<th>Full-Scale Exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
<td>Simple preparation, 2 weeks</td>
<td>Easy to design, 1 month Preceded by orientation</td>
<td>1 month preparation Preceded by orientation and 1 or more drills</td>
<td>Complex, 6–18 months preparation Preceded by simpler exercises Significant allocation of resources</td>
<td>Extensive time, effort, resources 1–1½ years development Including preparatory drills, tabletops, functional exercises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building an Exercise Program

As you have seen, a progressive exercise program involves the combined efforts of many agencies, departments, or other entities in a series of activities that increase in complexity until mastery is achieved.

Building an exercise program is a little like planning a single exercise—except that the activities take place on a much larger scale. Plans are developed by a team and are based on a careful examination of the operating plan.

The development of an exercise program has many facets, including:

- Analysis of capabilities and costs.
- Scheduling of tasks.
- Public relations efforts.
- Development of a long-term plan.

Careful work on the long-term plan will carry over into the design of individual exercises.

The Planning Team

A comprehensive exercise plan requires the combined efforts of many people. For a community program, the team should consist of representatives from every major government agency in the jurisdiction and from private and volunteer organizations large enough to have exercise mandates:

- Fire department
- Sheriff
- Public works
- Hospital
- Airport
- Schools
- Communications
- Volunteer organizations
Building an Exercise Program (Continued)

In a private or volunteer organization that is planning an exercise program, the team would be similarly organized, with representatives of all major functions and departments.

The emergency manager and other emergency personnel (or the person responsible for the organization’s emergency response effort) would take the lead, and the representatives would then meet to analyze what they need to do to support one another. Often organizations can meet the exercise needs of more than one agency at a time. This teamwork can help establish important relationships among participating organizations.

Later, members of the team can also serve on exercise design teams to design individual exercises.

Goal Setting

Because a comprehensive exercise program usually extends over several months, it is important to set long-term goals or develop a mission statement. Without this, the program is likely to lack focus and continuity.

Schedule and Sequence

When these preliminary steps (organizing the team and establishing a mission statement and goals) have been taken, the hard work of drawing up a plan can take place. Developing the exercise program plan involves:

1. Laying out a series of exercises that can meet the needs of the various participating entities.

2. Organizing them into a workable sequence and time schedule.
Building an Exercise Program (Continued)

**Plan Format**

An exercise program plan can use any format, but it should include the following elements:

- A timeframe
- A problem statement
- Long-range goal(s)
- Functional objectives
- A schedule
- Exercise descriptions, including:
  - Type of exercise.
  - Participants.
  - Purpose.
  - Rationale.

A sample plan format is shown on the next page. This is a hypothetical example of one community’s exercise plan.
## Building an Exercise Program (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Format</th>
<th>Sample Plan: Comprehensive Exercise Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Plan Format

Note: During the previous year, several tabletops and functional exercises were held to test weaknesses in Communications, Alert and Notification, and Individual/Family Assistance. The series of exercises might take less time in some communities.

### Timeframe

The exercise program extends over an 18-month period.

### Present Problems

This program has been formulated to address problems arising as a result of rapid population growth. According to experts, possibilities for a mass casualty incident are increasing. Personnel involved in the functional areas listed below have not been tested in the last year.

### Long-Range Goal

To work toward a full-scale exercise testing all important functions in the context of a mass casualty incident. This will satisfy FEMA requirements and full-scale exercise requirements for the hospital and airport, by involving these agencies.

### Functions to be Tested

Health and Medical, Public Information, Coordination and Control (EOC Operations, Incident Command)

- To determine the adequacy of plans and procedures within the following functional areas to handle a mass casualty incident: Health and Medical, Public Information, Coordination and Control (EOC Operations, Incident command).
- To test the ability of the above-named functional areas to communicate and coordinate their response efforts during a mass casualty incident.
- To test the ability to obtain adequate resources (locally and through mutual aid agreements) in the above-named functional areas to handle a mass casualty incident.

### First Month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise:</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For:</td>
<td>Emergency Management staff and heads of various agencies: Mental Health Association, State Funeral Director, County Coroner, County Fire, County Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
<td>To review new plans and procedures for dealing with mass casualty incidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale:</td>
<td>Inform those who are unaware of plans and gain support and additional input from department leaders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Building an Exercise Program (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Format</th>
<th>Sample Plan: Comprehensive Exercise Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Second Month** | Exercise: Orientation  
For: Emergency management staff and heads of various agencies: fire, police staff, county Public Information Officer (PIO)  
Purpose: To review new plans for mass casualty incidents with responders  
Rationale: Gain support and additional input from first responders and acquaint them with leadership’s plans |
| **Fourth Month** | Exercise: Training course with functional exercise  
For: Responders and incident commanders; Emergency management staff; various chiefs, captains, lieutenants from fire and police; Emergency Medical Services (EMS), mental health, Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES), funeral directors, county coroner, county PIO  
Purpose: To provide training in field mass casualty incident response  
Rationale: This is a training session in the FEMA Field Mass Casualty Incident Response course. This course provides an excellent overview of specific needs related to a mass fatality incident. The course culminates in a functional activity. |
| **Seventh Month** | Exercise: Drill  
For: Fire, police, EMS, coroner, funeral directors  
Purpose: To set up the Incident Command System (ICS) for responding to mass fatality incidents  
Rationale: Establish ICS to support needed functions and tasks |
| **Eighth Month** | Exercise: Drill  
For: PIO, fire, police, Emergency Manager  
Purpose: To set up Joint Information Center (JIC)  
Rationale: Acquaint participants with the PIO function and JIC operations, test equipment and lines of communication |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Format</th>
<th>Sample Plan: Comprehensive Exercise Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ninth Month | **Exercise:** Drill  
**For:** Mental health, funeral directors, PIO, clergy, Emergency Manager  
**Purpose:** To set up a family assistance center  
**Rationale:** Acquaint participants with the office equipment and test role as support to the victims’ families |
| Eleventh Month | **Exercise:** Tabletop exercise  
**For:** Incident Command, PIO, police, fire, EMS  
**Purpose:** To pull together the three functions tested in the previous drills in the context of a mass casualty incident as the result of a hotel fire  
**Rationale:** Address and resolve potential communication and coordination problems among the Incident Command, PIO, police, fire, and EMS before the functional exercise |
| Fourteenth Month | **Exercise:** Functional exercise  
**For:** Communications, coordination and control, ICS and EOC, PIO, health and medical  
**Purpose:** To test additional functions for mass fatality in the context of a plane crash: Emergency public information effectiveness, health and medical mass casualty, coordination and control, ICS, and EOC operations  
**Rationale:** Identify preliminary shortfalls and test overall coordination before full-scale exercise |
| Fifteenth Month | **Exercise:** Tabletop exercise  
**For:** Communications, coordination and control, ICS and EOC, PIO, health and medical  
**Purpose:** To correct and retest problems identified in preceding functional exercise  
**Rationale:** Work out potential problems discovered in the previous functional exercise and make adjustments necessary before the full-scale exercise |
### Building an Exercise Program (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Format</th>
<th>Sample Plan: Comprehensive Exercise Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eighteenth Month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise:</td>
<td>Full-scale exercise: Airplane crash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For:</td>
<td>All agencies: heads of agencies and responders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
<td>To test all functions in the context of a mass casualty airplane crash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale:</td>
<td>The exercise fulfills full-scale requirements for FEMA, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements for airports, and Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) Certification for the hospital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity: Develop a Comprehensive Exercise Program Plan

Working from the needs assessment you completed for your jurisdiction or organization in the previous unit, develop a plan for a comprehensive exercise program to address those needs. Include the key elements discussed in the last section. You can use the following worksheet (which also appears as Job Aid 2 in Appendix A) in developing your plan. If this format doesn’t work for you, change it to meet your needs.

Comprehensive Exercise Program Planning Worksheet

Time Frame:

Present Problems:

Long-Range Goal:

Functional Objectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity: Develop a Comprehensive Exercise Program Plan  
(Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise Design
Activity: Develop a Comprehensive Exercise Program Plan (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month:</th>
<th>Exercise:</th>
<th>For:</th>
<th>Purpose:</th>
<th>Rationale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month:</th>
<th>Exercise:</th>
<th>For:</th>
<th>Purpose:</th>
<th>Rationale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month:</th>
<th>Exercise:</th>
<th>For:</th>
<th>Purpose:</th>
<th>Rationale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month:</th>
<th>Exercise:</th>
<th>For:</th>
<th>Purpose:</th>
<th>Rationale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity: Develop a Comprehensive Exercise Program Plan (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month:</th>
<th>Exercise:</th>
<th>For:</th>
<th>Purpose:</th>
<th>Rationale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary and Transition

Unit 2 provided an overview of the five main types of exercise activities that make up a comprehensive exercise program. Unit 3 provides general information on the exercise development process and illustrates how the activities in that process relate to one another.

For More Information

- The FEMA Comprehensive Exercise Program:
  
Knowledge Check

Carefully read each question and all of the possible answers before selecting the most appropriate response for each test item. Circle the letter corresponding to the answer you have chosen.

1. In a progressive exercise program, the exercises:
   a. Have a consistent format but are conducted with increasing frequency.
   b. Are organized to increase in complexity.
   c. Are organized to decrease in complexity.
   d. Are sponsored on a rotating basis by different organizations.

2. A likely cause of exercise failure is:
   a. Running too many drills and functional exercises.
   b. Conducting orientations and drills before functional exercises.
   c. Rushing into a full-scale exercise before the organization is ready.
   d. Basing the selection of participants on the nature of the exercise.

3. Which statement is true of an orientation?
   a. It requires field sites and actual equipment.
   b. It may be used to introduce or explain plans and policies.
   c. It involves a controller, simulators, and evaluators.
   d. It is used to test a specific operation.

4. Which statement is true of a drill?
   a. It is best conducted in a conference room.
   b. It involves a controller, simulators, and evaluators.
   c. It is used to test a specific operation.
   d. It is aimed primarily at policy makers and decision makers.

5. Which statement is true of a tabletop exercise?
   a. It involves a highly realistic simulation.
   b. It involves a controller, simulators, and evaluators.
   c. It requires field sites and actual equipment deployment.
   d. It is a facilitated analysis of an emergency situation.
6. Which statement is true of a functional exercise?

   a. It involves a controller, simulators, and evaluators.
   b. It is simple, informal, and stress-free.
   c. It requires field sites and actual equipment deployment.
   d. It may be used to introduce or explain plans and policies.
Knowledge Check (Continued)

7. Which statement is true of a full-scale exercise?
   a. It involves a highly realistic simulation.
   b. It is aimed primarily at policy makers and decision makers.
   c. It requires field sites but actual equipment remains in the shed.
   d. It is used to test a specific operation.

8. Development of an exercise program includes analysis of capabilities and costs and scheduling of tasks.
   a. True
   b. False

9. The planning for an exercise program should be done primarily by the emergency manager or whoever is responsible for the organization’s emergency response effort.
   a. True
   b. False

10. Which statement is NOT true of progressive exercise programs?
    a. They allow participating organizations to test both implementation of procedures and coordination with each other.
    b. Each successive exercise builds upon the previous one until mastery is achieved.
    c. The entire program is planned to achieve identified goals.
    d. Very little commitment is required from participating agencies because they can opt in or out at any time.
Knowledge Check (Continued)

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. c
5. d
6. a
7. a
8. a
9. b
10. d