

## Lesson Overview

After your Emergency Operations Plan is developed, the next critical steps are training key players and testing the Plan. Without testing a Plan in a simulated emergency, it is impossible to tell if the Plan's assumptions, assignments, and other details would be effective in a real emergency situation.

This lesson presents information on training and testing your plan. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain the distinction between testing and training.
  - Describe the two common ways of testing a Plan, and the proper application of each.
  - Explain procedures for various types of drills.
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## Training, Testing, More Training, and More Testing!

The process of implementing your school's Emergency Operations Plan is a cyclical process that includes:

- Training a small group of staff and faculty.
  - Testing the Plan and making any needed revisions.
  - Training all school personnel and students to implement the tested Plan.
  - Conducting regular drills and exercises.
  - Revising the Plan based on lessons learned and changing situations (e.g., a new addition to the school), hazards, or threats.
  - Retraining school personnel and students.
  - And so forth!
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## The Goal of Testing Your Plan

The goal of testing an Emergency Operations Plan is to prepare for a real emergency—to save lives and limit property damage.

Specific goals of testing a school's Plan are to:

- Discover any planning weaknesses.
  - Reveal resource needs.
  - Improve coordination.
  - Practice using the communication network.
  - Clarify roles and responsibilities.
  - Improve individual performance.
  - Improve readiness for a real emergency.
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## Testing vs. Training

When testing a school Emergency Operations Plan, **it is the plan being tested**—not personnel. The Plan must then be revised to incorporate lessons learned from the test.

Before a Plan can be tested, however, some personnel must be trained so that they know what their responsibilities are and have the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out their responsibilities.

Let's begin by looking at the types of training provided.

## Training

There are many different ways to provide training on your Emergency Operations Plan. Following are two alternative training methods:

- Orientation Seminars
  - Hands-On Training
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### Orientation Seminars

Orientation seminars are similar to many briefings that school personnel conduct on various topics. Such seminars can be used to:

- Introduce new programs, policies, or Plans.
  - Review roles and responsibilities.
  - Serve as a starting point for other types of exercises.
  - Provide parents at back-to-school nights or PTA meetings with information on school preparedness.
  - Provide students with basic information about what to do for different types of emergencies.
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### Orientation to the Emergency Operations Plan

An orientation seminar might be a good way to:

- Introduce the general concepts of the Plan.
  - Announce staff assignments, roles, and responsibilities.
  - Present general emergency procedures.
  - Describe how the Plan will be tested and give the test timeframes.
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### Hands-On Training

After familiarizing school personnel with basic policies and procedures, hands-on training can:

- Provide practice in specialized skills (e.g., CPR, first aid, basic search and rescue).
  - Allow for practice of newly acquired skills.
  - Help maintain proficiency for infrequently used skills.
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### Types of Testing

The two most common methods for testing a school Emergency Operations Plan are:

- Tabletop Exercises
- Drills

This section of the lesson will present information on each method, beginning with tabletop exercises.

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## Tabletop Exercises

A tabletop exercise is a simulation activity in which a certain scenario is presented and participants explain what they would do to respond.

The scenario for a tabletop activity can be presented orally by an activity leader, in written text, or by audio or video means.

In a tabletop exercise, sometimes all information is presented at the start of the exercise; in other simulations, new information is presented as the situation unfolds.

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### A Typical Tabletop Exercise

After an initial briefing, participants in a tabletop exercise work together to:

- Coordinate information to inform emergency responders,
  - Staff the Incident Command Center,
  - Perform their assigned emergency response roles and responsibilities, and
  - Operate in much the same manner as they would in a real emergency situation.
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### Outcomes of Tabletop Exercises

In addition to highlighting weaknesses or problems with the school Emergency Operations Plan that is tested in the exercise, tabletop exercises can also:

- Highlight the importance of communication, coordination, and cooperation between responders.
- Enable participants to get a first-hand view of the responsibilities and needs of other responders.
- Give participants an understanding of how their actions can affect others.

In order to be effective, tabletop simulations of school emergencies must involve participation by all first-response agencies.

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### When To Use Tabletop Exercises

School emergency teams find that tabletop exercises:

- Enable staff members to walk through an emergency scenario and make decisions similar to those made in an actual emergency.
- Lend themselves to low-stress discussion of plans, policies, and procedures.
- Provide an opportunity to resolve questions of coordination and responsibility.

It is particularly helpful to conduct tabletop exercises on new or revised Plans, before more wide-scale training or drills are conducted.

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### **Developing Tabletop Exercises**

When deciding which areas to include in an exercise:

- Address serious problems first.
  - Match the problem to the exercise type.
  - Exercise only the parts of the Plan identified in the objectives.
  - Don't add unnecessary complications.
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### **Facilitators and Tabletop Exercises**

The facilitator is a key to the success of a tabletop exercise.

The facilitator:

- Leads the tabletop exercise and controls the pace and flow of group discussion.
- Presents the scenario developments (narratives) and problem statements to the participants.
- Guides a discussion of actions the participants might take in response to those problem statements.

In addition, you may want someone there as a recorder to capture the lessons learned and suggestions.

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### **When To Use Drills**

Drills are the second method of testing your Plan. Many schools systems use drills to:

- Practice and perfect a single emergency response.
  - Concentrate the efforts of a single function.
  - Provide field experience.
  - Test certain recovery functions (e.g., damage assessment).
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### **Emergency Procedures Testable by Drills**

Drills can test how well faculty, staff, and students respond to simulated:

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|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| ▪ Fires           | ▪ Bomb threats                |
| ▪ Tornadoes       | ▪ Earthquakes                 |
| ▪ Intruders       | ▪ Explosions                  |
| ▪ Bus emergencies | ▪ Hazardous materials release |
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### Classroom-Based Drills

Classroom-based drills are completed by individual classes, although all classes might conduct the drill simultaneously. The purpose of these drills is to ensure all students and staff members understand what they are supposed to do.

An example of a classroom-based drill is practicing the “Drop, cover, and hold” procedure, in which students immediately drop to the ground, protect their heads, and to the best degree possible, cover vital organs.

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### Evacuation Drills

School drills involving the entire population are used to test response procedures (e.g., taking roll, setting up a command post, or conducting a sweep of the school).

The most common type of school drill is an evacuation. Evacuation drills can help verify whether evacuation routes and assembly areas are appropriate for all types of emergencies.

One type of drill that should not be overlooked in properly preparing for emergencies is a **bus evacuation drill**.

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### Drills Procedures

All staff and students should know and practice:

- Evacuation drills (all personnel exit the building).
- Reverse evacuation drills (all personnel go to safe places in the building, from outdoor recess or P.E. class).
- Lock-down drills (all personnel remain in locked classrooms).
- Shelter-in-place drills (all personnel remain in sealed classrooms).
- Drop, cover, and hold drills (all personnel drop low, take cover under furniture, cover eyes and protect internal organs, and hold onto furniture legs).

Sample procedures for each type of drill appear on the following screen.

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### Sample Drill Procedures

Sample procedures for the following types of drills are presented below:

- Evacuation Drills
  - Reverse Evacuation Drills
  - Lock-Down Drills
  - Shelter-in-Place Drills
  - Drop, Cover, and Hold Drills
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**Sample Drill Procedures (Continued)**

<b>Evacuation Drills</b>	<p>WHEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grab the emergency backpack on the way out of your room.</li> <li>2. Take the closest and safest way out as posted.</li> <li>3. Do not stop for student/staff belongings.</li> <li>4. Go to the designated area and wait for instructions.</li> <li>5. Check for injuries.</li> <li>6. Take attendance. Hold up "GREEN" card if all are present. Report missing students to command post by holding up "RED" card. A runner will be sent to you.</li> <li>7. If you have any other questions or problems, hold up your "RED" card.</li> </ol>
<b>Reverse Evacuation Drills</b>	<p>WHEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Move students/staff inside as quickly as possible.</li> <li>2. Report to homeroom.</li> <li>3. Take attendance. Use voice mail to report missing students.</li> <li>4. Wait for further instructions.</li> </ol>
<b>Lock-Down Drills</b>	<p>WHEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students should report to the nearest classroom.</li> <li>2. Close all windows, lock your doors, and do not leave for any reason.</li> <li>3. Cover all room and door windows.</li> <li>4. Stay away from all doors and windows, and move students to interior walls and drop.</li> <li>5. Shut off lights.</li> <li>6. BE QUIET!</li> <li>7. Wait for further instructions.</li> </ol>
<b>Shelter-in-Place Drills</b>	<p>WHEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear students from the halls immediately. Students should report to assigned classrooms.</li> <li>2. Close and tape all windows and doors, and seal the gap between the bottom of the door and the floor.</li> <li>3. Take attendance. Use voice mail to report missing students.</li> <li>4. Do not allow anyone to leave the classroom. Allow emergency bathroom use only, using the buddy system.</li> <li>5. Stay away from all doors and windows.</li> <li>6. Permit classroom use of telephones in emergencies only.</li> <li>7. Wait for further instructions.</li> </ol>

**Sample Drill Procedures (Continued)**

<b>Drop, Cover, and Hold Drills</b>	<p>WHEN THE COMMAND "DROP" IS GIVEN:</p> <p>DROP: Take cover under a nearby desk or table, and face away from the window.</p> <p>COVER your eyes by leaning your face against your arms.</p> <p>HOLD on to the table or desk legs.</p>
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**Documenting Test Results**

Be sure to build documentation and after-action reporting into your testing procedure. Proper documentation will help school officials determine:

- What parts of the Plan work well.
- What parts need additional attention.
- Whether additional training is necessary.

One or more evaluators/observers should be assigned to record what happens during the exercise or drill. The number of observers needed is based on the complexity of the exercise or drill.

**More Advanced Exercises**

Other types of tests include:

- **Functional Exercise:** A functional exercise simulates a real emergency under high-stress conditions involving multiple responders. This type of exercise utilizes communications equipment and lasts between 3 to 8 hours.
- **Full-Scale Exercise:** A full-scale exercise tests the community's total response capability. This exercise is as close to reality as possible with roleplayers and field equipment being deployed. A full-scale exercise can be several hours to 1 or more days in length.

It is critical that the school/school district work with the local Emergency Manager, rather than try to develop and run these types of complex exercises in isolation.

**Resources****IS-120 An Orientation to Community Disaster Exercises**

This independent study course includes a 1/2" VHS videocassette and a student manual that provides an orientation to the types of exercises used to test and evaluate a community's Emergency Operations Plan. The content illustrates the eight basic steps in exercise design and emphasizes the use of a design team to ensure the success of a community's exercise program.

For more information: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/IS/is120.asp>

**Summary**

This lesson covered the importance of:

- Training school personnel to implement your school's Emergency Operations Plan.
  - Testing the Plan.
  - Using test results to modify the Plan.
  - Retraining personnel after modifying the Plan.
  - Periodically retraining and testing the Plan.
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