



Unit 11: Course Summary

Introduction

This unit will briefly summarize the learning from the Exercise Design course. After completing this unit you should be able to summarize the key points of this course.

Reasons to Exercise

Exercises are conducted in order to evaluate an organization's capability to execute one or more portions of its response plan or contingency plan. Exercises can be used to provide individual training and improve the emergency management system. Reasons to perform exercises include:

- Testing and evaluating plans, policies, and procedures.
- Revealing planning weaknesses and resource gaps.
- Improve individual performance and organizational coordination and communications.
- Train personnel and clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Gain program recognition.
- Satisfy regulatory requirements.

Comprehensive Exercise Program

A comprehensive exercise program is made up of progressively complex exercises, each one building on the previous one, until the exercises are as close to reality as possible. The program must be carefully planned to achieve identified goals and should involve a wide range of organizations in its planning and execution.

Comprehensive Exercise Program (Continued)

Types of Exercises

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

- **Orientation seminar:** This is a low-stress, informal discussion in a group setting with little or no simulation. It is used to provide information and introduce people to policies, plans, and procedures.
- **Drill:** This is a coordinated, supervised exercise used to test a single specific operation or function. It involves deployment of equipment and personnel.
- **Tabletop exercise:** This is a facilitated group analysis of an emergency situation in an informal, stress-free environment. It is designed for examination of operational plans, problem identification, and in-depth problem solving.
- **Functional exercise:** This is a fully simulated interactive exercise that tests the capability of an organization to respond to a simulated event. It takes place in the EOC and focuses on coordination of multiple functions or organizations. Strives for realism, short of actual deployment of equipment and personnel.
- **Full-scale exercise:** This is a simulated emergency event, as close to reality as possible. It involves all emergency response functions and requires full deployment of equipment and personnel.

Building an Exercise Program

Building an exercise program is a multi organization team effort that includes:

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

The Exercise Process

The process of creating and staging an exercise includes a lengthy sequence of tasks that occur in three phases: Before, during, and after the exercise. Some of the tasks fall under the heading of design and some are part of evaluation.

Major Task Accomplishments

A simple way of viewing the exercise process is the sequence of five major task accomplishments:

1. Establishing the base
2. Exercise development
3. Exercise conduct
4. Exercise critique and evaluation
5. Exercise follow up

Establishing the Base

Establishing the base is the process of laying the groundwork for the exercise. Some important aspects of this preparation are:

- Reviewing the current plan.
- Assessing capability to conduct an exercise.
- Addressing costs and liabilities.
- Gaining support.
- Assembling and organizing a design team.

The Exercise Process (Continued)

Exercise Documents

Four major documents are developed during the exercise design process:

- Exercise Plan
- Control Plan
- Evaluation Plan
- Player Handbook

These documents are basically handbooks for particular audiences. Much of the content of these documents comes from the eight exercise design steps.

Exercise Design Steps

Tabletop, functional, and full-scale exercises are based on a design process that includes eight steps:

1. Assess needs.
2. Define scope.
3. Write a statement of purpose.
4. Define objectives.
5. Compose a narrative.
6. Write major and detailed events.
7. List expected actions.
8. Prepare messages.

These are generally applicable steps regardless of the type of exercise. However, each type of exercise has some special considerations in how these steps are applied.

Exercise Design Steps (Continued)

Master Scenario Events List

Outputs from the design process are pulled together in the MSEL, a chart that the controller and simulators can use in keeping the exercise on track and on schedule.

The Tabletop Exercise

Exercise Format

The tabletop exercise is essentially a group brainstorming session centered on a scenario narrative and problem statements or messages that are presented to members of the group. The format is informal, and the exercise is self-evaluated by the participants.

Facilitating a Tabletop

The facilitator is responsible for:

- Setting the stage.
- Distributing messages.
- Stimulating discussion and pushing participants toward in-depth problem solving.
- Involving everyone.
- Controlling and sustaining the action.

The Tabletop Exercise (Continued)

Designing a Tabletop

In applying the eight design steps, the first four steps (needs assessment, scope, purpose statement, objectives) are handled in the normal manner. The remaining steps can be simplified:

- The narrative can be relatively short.
- Only a few major or detailed events are required, and they are turned into problem statements.
- Expected actions must be identified, but they may involve such things as discussion or reaching consensus.
- Only a few (e.g., 10–15) carefully written messages or problem statements are needed.

The Functional Exercise

Exercise Format

The functional exercise usually takes place in the operating center and involves policy makers and decision makers. It uses an event scenario to test multiple functions or organizations, emphasizing coordination and communication.

Participants include the:

- Controller (the manager of the exercise).
- Players (people responding to the scenario within their normal roles).
- Simulators (people playing the parts of organizations and field units outside of the operations center, who deliver messages to players).
- Evaluators (observers who record actions taken in response to messages).

Participants respond in real time, adding an element of stress to the exercise. Communications equipment, displays, and other enhancements can be used to add to the realism.

The Functional Exercise (Continued)

Controlling a Functional Exercise

The controller is responsible for:

- Monitoring interaction and progress.
- Keeping the exercise on track.
- Dealing with the unexpected.
- Adjusting the pace as needed. (The flow of messages can be adjusted by adding, deleting, misdirecting, or reassigning messages.)

Designing a Functional Exercise

The full eight-step process is used to develop functional exercises.

The Full-Scale Exercise

Exercise Format

The full-scale exercise combines the interactivity of the functional exercise with a field element and requires the coordination of the efforts of several organizations. It differs from a drill in that a drill focuses on a single operation and exercises only one organization.

The full-scale exercise achieves realism through:

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

The Full-Scale Exercise (Continued)

Participant Roles

All levels of personnel are involved, including policy makers, coordination and operations personnel, and field personnel. A controller manages the exercise; volunteers simulate victims; evaluators observe and keep a log of significant events; and a safety officer ensures that potential safety issues are addressed.

Designing a Full-Scale Exercise

After the first four design steps, the following special considerations apply to the design process:

- The narrative is largely a staged visual scene, so the written narrative can be minimal. The visual narrative must be planned in careful detail.
- Major and minor events are often presented visually and must be carefully planned.
- Expected actions must, as always, be specifically identified.
- Both visual and prescribed messages are used.

In a full-scale exercise, details are everything.

Site Selection

The site selected for the event must have adequate space and be as realistic as possible without interfering with normal traffic or safety.

Scene Management

Scene management involves planning and handling:

- Logistics at the scene.
- Creation of a believable emergency scene.
- Number of victims.
- Management of props and materials.
- Number of controllers.

The Full-Scale Exercise (Continued)

Other Special Considerations

Other special considerations in a full-scale exercise include:

- Managing personnel and resources (many volunteers, lots of props).
- Ensuring that the emergency management system maintains response capability for routine events.
- Avoiding safety issues.
- Attending to issues of legal liability.
- Having a plan for emergency call-off.
- Working with the media.

Exercise Evaluation

For an exercise to be useful, it must be accompanied by an evaluation—less formal for the tabletop, structured for the function and full-scale. Good evaluations can help the organization identify:

- Whether the exercise has achieved its objectives.
- Needed improvements in plans, procedures, or guidelines or the emergency management system as a whole.
- Training and staffing deficiencies.
- Equipment needs.
- Need for additional exercising.

The evaluation team leader—usually drawn from the design team—is responsible for evaluation methodology, selection and training of the evaluation team, and report preparation.

Exercise Evaluation (Continued)

Methodology

The evaluation methodology includes:

- Evaluation team structure.
- Objectives to be measured.
- Evaluation packet (i.e., observation procedures and recording forms).

Post exercise Meetings

Post exercise meetings include the player debriefing and meetings of the evaluation team to analyze the results and develop the after action report.

After Action Report

The After Action Report should describe the purpose of the exercise and address goals, objectives, pre exercise activities, participants, scenario, accomplishments and shortfalls, and recommendations.

Exercise Enhancements

Exercise enhancements are used to add to the realism of the exercise. Depending on the type of exercise and available resources, enhancements may include:

- Communications Equipment.
- Visuals.
- Other Equipment and Materials.
- People and Props.
- Resources.

Next Steps

You have now completed IS139 and should be ready to take the Final Exam.

To submit the final exam online, go to <http://training.fema.gov> and click on FEMA Independent Study. Follow the links to the specific course. Click on the title for this course, and then click on the final exam link. Enter all requested information and click submit.

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