Learning Objectives

By the end of this session (readings, websites, lectures and exercises) the student should be able to:

14.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP) and the role of the tabletop in the exercise continuum
14.2 Demonstrate an understanding of the need for conducting tabletop exercises (TTX)
14.3 Demonstrate the ability to design, conduct and evaluate a TTX
14.4. Explain the use of improvement plans in raising the level of preparedness

Session Overview

This unit is designed to give the student an understanding of the use of exercises as the primary tool for assessing preparedness and identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Exercises enable an objective assessment of capability which in turn paves the way for an improved response during and actual event.

An overview of HSEEP and the role of the discussion based exercise are reviewed followed by an actual tabletop exercise. Please note that we have provided two examples of tabletops that you may want to use with varying degrees of sophistication.

The suggested readings and websites are:

- HSEEP Volume I: HSEEP Overview and Exercise Program Management
- HSEEP Volume II: Exercise Planning and Conduct
- HSEEP Volume III: Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning
- HSEEP Volume IV: Library – Sample Exercise Materials
- Lessons Learned Information System www.llis.dhs.gov/
Slide-by-slide Comments and Notations*

* Many slides are self-explanatory or are well described in HSEEP Volumes I, II, III and IV and which may be found at https://hseep.dhs.gov/pages/1001_HSEEP7.aspx In order to reduce duplication these slides do not have specific accompanying comments. The HSEEP website provides access to many interesting readings and resources such as lessons learned, best practices, templates – just to name a few.

Most areas of HSEEP are available without any special access capability although there are some sections such as certain documents in Volume IV (accessed through secure HSEEP portal) and the National Planning Scenarios (accessed through the Lessons Learned Information Sharing www.llis.gov) that do require a login process. Your organization may be able to sponsor your membership of these “secure sites”. Graphics in this lecture are all accessible without a login.

Session 14 Introduction
The role of exercises in the overall preparedness model cannot be understated. Reading, listening and learning from a didactic model constitute an excellent basis to prepare the student. However the challenge of debating the issues with one’s peers serves to solidify the thought processes.

Objectives
In order to develop exercises for local, state and Federal governments and to receive funding from any government agencies for this purpose the student must ensure that they are in compliance with the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP).

HSEEP
HSPD-8 mandated the establishment by the Department of Homeland Security of a standardized exercise policy and methodology to be used for the National Exercise Program. Common doctrine with common terminology (as seen in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) provide the basis for interagency cooperation during an actual event. An integral component of HSEEP is the Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan which is established during a Training and Exercise Plan Workshop (T&EPW). Milestones are set for training and exercises and priorities are set for the evaluation of preparedness capabilities.
## Exercise Types

Reference: Chapter 2 Exercise Program Management, HSEEP Volume I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise Type</th>
<th>Utility/Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion-Based Exercises</strong></td>
<td>Familiarize players with current plans, policies, agreements, and procedures;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>develop new plans, policies, agreements, and procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Seminar</strong></td>
<td>Provide overview of new or current plans, resources, strategies, concepts or</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Workshop</strong></td>
<td>Achieve specific goal or build product (e.g., exercise objectives, SOPs, policies, plans)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tabletop Exercise (TTX)</strong></td>
<td>Validate plans and procedures by utilizing a hypothetical scenario to drive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>participant discussions</td>
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<td><strong>Game</strong></td>
<td>Explore decision-making process and examine consequences of those decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Operations-Based Exercises</strong></td>
<td>Validate plans, policies, agreements, and procedures; clarify roles and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>responsibilities; identify resource gaps</td>
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<td><strong>Drill</strong></td>
<td>Validate a single operation or function of an agency</td>
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<td><strong>Functional Exercise (FE)</strong></td>
<td>Evaluate capabilities, functions, plans, and staffs of Incident Command,</td>
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<td>Unified Command, Intelligence centers, or other multi-agency coordination centers (e.g., EOCs)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Full-Scale Exercise (FSE)</strong></td>
<td>Validate plans, policies, procedures, and cooperative agreements developed in</td>
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<td>previous exercises through their actual implementation and execution during a</td>
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<td>simulated scenario; includes actual mobilization of resources, conduct of</td>
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<td>operations, and integrated elements of functional exercise play (e.g., EOCs, command posts)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Player Action</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Real-Time Play?</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notional; player actions are imaginary or hypothetical</td>
<td>Rarely exceeding 8 hours</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Varies</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2-5 hours</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Multi- or Single-agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3-8 hours</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Multi-agency/Single function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notional</td>
<td>4-8 hours</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Multi-agency/Multiple functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notional</td>
<td>2-5 hours</td>
<td>No (though some simulations provide real- or near-real-time play)</td>
<td>Multi-agency/Multiple functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>2-4 hours</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Single agency/Single function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command staff actions are actual; movement of other personnel, equipment, or adversaries is simulated</td>
<td>4-8 hours or several days or weeks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Multiple functional areas/Multiple functions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>One full day or several days or weeks</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Multi-agency/Multiple functions</td>
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**Building Block Approach**

The infancy to teen concept applies to exercise types – the more simplistic Discussion-Based exercise will precede the more sophisticated Operations-Based exercise. Not all classifications are always used. A common formula for an exercise series is – tabletop, functional (command post), and full-scale. It’s important to allow enough time between each for the lessons learned to be applied before the next exercise.

**Preparedness Cycle**

Too often the lessons learned from an exercise and recorded in an After Action Report (see later) are not considered when making changes to existing emergency operation plans (EOP) sometimes called emergency management plans (EMP). The cycle can be termed the “cycle of life” – the exercise gives birth to a new series of issues to be answered in the next iteration of the plan. We plan, we train on the plan, we exercise the plan, we evaluate the efficacy of the plan and then we start again.

**Exercise Components**

HSEEP requires two planning conferences for a tabletop exercise – Initial and Final. There is usually a kickoff or Concepts and Objectives meeting. The group will identify the type, purpose, scope, and objectives of the exercise at the first meeting; they will determine dates, times and locations for future meetings and for the exercise. For more detail on what is accomplished at each meeting see later slide on “Tabletop Exercise Planning Timeline”.

**Exercise Planning Team**

This should be structured along ICS principles as illustrated below and is the pivotal organization for planning all exercise activities.

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Reference: Chapter 3 Exercise Program Management, HSEEP Volume I
Planning Timelines
Timelines vary according to the complexity of the exercise. Exercise planners use shorter timelines for tabletop exercises (TTXs) than for full-scale exercises (FSEs). In addition, the TTX will only require two planning conferences (initial and final) while the functional exercise and the full-scale exercise will need three (initial, mid-term and final). These differences are represented in the schematic in the next slide. An examples timeline for discussion based exercises can be found in HSEEP Volume I Appendix C, pages C1 – C3.

Design and Development 1& 2 and Scenario
The National Planning Scenarios are purely a guide and were designed to provide a base from which the target capabilities and universal task list were developed. When you design an exercise you need to consider what it is you want to achieve – what piece of the response you want to test, what vulnerabilities you want to emphasize and how the exercise should drive the group to try to find solutions. The scenario forces the evaluation of these criteria by using the objectives to develop the exercise evaluation plan or guides which, in turn, will highlight problem area as well as strengths.

Reference: Chapter 4 Exercise Program Management, HSEEP Volume I
When designing a biological tabletop exercise it is important for the planning team to discuss the elements represented in the graphic below.

- Is the agent chosen a communicable disease – isolation and quarantine required?
- The lethality of the agent will determine the number of casualties. Using sufficient casualties to challenge them but NOT overwhelm them is usually the rule of thumb. BUT, for the purposes of this course (Catastrophe Readiness and Response) it will be necessary to create a scenario with overwhelming numbers of both casualties and fatalities.
Reference: HSEEP Volume IV (outside the secure portal).

**Stakeholder Participation**
Key staff, decision makers, and elected and appointed officials are typical participants in a tabletop exercise. Sign-in sheets providing contact information for all participants are an essential component of the tabletop. This sets up contact lists that participants may use to share information and/or utilize during an actual event.

**HSPD-5: Managing Domestic Incidents**
Purpose - “to enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive national incident management system.”
Policy – “to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the United States Government shall establish a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management. The objective of the United States Government is to ensure that all levels of government across the Nation have the capability to work efficiently and effectively together, using a national approach to domestic incident management. In these efforts, with regard to domestic incidents, the United States Government treats crisis management and consequence management as a single, integrated function, rather than as two separate functions.”
**Anthrax Tabletop Exercise**
The Moderator will introduce oneself and give a brief thumbnail sketch of credentials. He/she will briefly explain the rationale for conducting the exercise (what it is that we want to achieve) and define a tabletop exercise.

**Participant Introductions**
- The moderator provides the overall management, control, and direction during the exercise and is the primary authority for decisions related to initiation, suspension and termination of the tabletop. The moderator will keep the participants focused on the activities at the facility and is responsible for ensuring that key issues are addressed.
- The facilitators are subject matter experts who are assigned to each breakout group and encourage participants to communicate with others. They keep the discussion on track and within established time limits and contrive to raise awareness around the key issues without dominating the dialogue.
- Observers may participate for official or educational purposes. They should not interact with participants, contribute information or opinions, or interfere with the tabletop in any way. If sufficient time is available during the hotwash they may be asked to briefly share their thoughts on the exercise.

**Agenda**
When developing the agenda don’t forget to take breaks into consideration and to provide enough time at the end for an adequate Hotwash. Also, participants will need time to complete the participant feedback form. A sample participant evaluation form can be found in Volume IV under “Exercise Conduct”.

Once participants have left, the moderator will debrief the facilitators (if using break-out groups) and the scribes so that an overview of proceedings is shared will still fresh in everyone’s mind.

**Primary Objectives**
Exercise objectives are the cornerstone of design and development. They should be realistic and measurable.

**Module One – Recognition**
The first module focuses on disease recognition and the steps that the hospital must take in the earliest phase of a suspected outbreak.

**End of Module One (and Two)**
Break-out into groups or use single plenary session. Good idea to let people take a 5-minute break before the discussion periods. If using the breakout group format:
- Remind groups to assign a recorder and/or reporter. Explain roles of each.
- Moderator will circulate between the groups and, both facilitators and moderator can distribute injects as a tool to encourage the group if conversation lags or to provide extra pressure for more sophisticated groups. Give the facilitators a five minute warning so they can have the participants wrap up and have information ready to report back.
- Ideally the discussion session using breakouts will run approximately 20-30 minutes.
- Report back period on key issues or decisions made should not take more than five minutes per group.

If using the Single Group format:
- The moderator will use select questions directed to the appropriate members of the audience to highlight key issues for the group discussion.
Module Two – Response and Surge
The second module is designed to simulate the escalation of the event. Players should be instructed to focus on the issues as they are presented and not “play ahead of the scenario”. Issues of patient triage, resource management to include medications, hospital beds, staffing, and prophylaxis should be addressed.

Module Three – Recovery
Third module focuses on the disruption of services that have occurred during the event and what will need to be done to restore the affected locations to their pre-event status or as close to it as is possible. We know that four years after Katrina there are still major issues affecting the City of New Orleans so total recovery is not always an option or may take a very long time. The key in this module is to look at the “healing” process for infrastructure; the accompanying mental health issues; and the long term sequelae of the effects of anthrax on the survivors.

Example Facilitator Questions
These are only a sample of questions can be raised by the moderator to drive discussion during the plenary sessions. They can also be used by facilitators of the break out groups to ensure maintaining a focus on the issues at hand presented by the scenario and discouraging fixation on a single problem as well as deviation from the mission at hand. Planning team members should design questions focusing on their jurisdiction’s preparedness capability. Special sets of questions can also be used for functional breakout groups such as health and medical, emergency management, public safety and government.

Hotwash
A hot wash occurs immediately following a tabletop exercise and allows the participants the opportunity to provide immediate feedback. The objective of the hot wash is to review events or key decisions that took place during the exercise and to provide an opportunity for participants to describe any immediate lessons learned and to identify barriers/gaps in mounting an effective response. It enables the moderator to capture thoughts, decisions made and other events while they remain fresh in the participants’ minds and to describe what was learned.