

## Exercise Categories

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### Tabletop Exercises

A tabletop exercise is a discussion-based activity in which a simulated scenario is presented and participants in the exercise respond as if the scenario were really happening. Tabletop scenarios are often based on actual incidents or recent events in the news, particularly from neighboring or nearby communities.

Tabletops:

- Involve key personnel and emergency responders.
- Allow participants to assess the plan and response procedures.
- Encourage participant discussions, problem-solving, and decisionmaking in a low-stress environment.

### Conducting Tabletops

To successfully conduct a tabletop exercise:

- Identify key participants for the exercise.
- Identify facilitator(s) to run the exercise, manage the information exchange, control the discussion, present scenario developments, and guide actions.
- Set exercise goals and objectives to lay out expectations for the exercise. Goals should be measurable and achievable.
- Outline an incident to test a specific set of procedures, capability, and/or policy.
- Conduct a hot wash and a debrief to capture feedback and lessons learned.
- Develop a list of recommendations or an improvement plan to update training and exercise plans.

### Drills

Drills are operations-based exercises that usually test a single specific operation or function within a single entity. Conducted in a realistic environment, drills are often used to test new policies or equipment, practice current skills, or prepare for larger scale exercises.

### Conducting Drills

To successfully conduct a drill:

- Plans, policies, and procedures must be clearly defined and personnel must be familiar with them.
- Personnel must be trained on the processes and procedures to be drilled.
- It must be clear that a drill is being conducted, and that the situation is not an actual emergency.
- Evaluation and feedback must be included in the drill process.
- First responders should be included.

### Using Drills for Simulated Emergencies

Drills can test how well personnel respond to simulated emergencies, including:

- Bomb threats.
- Fires and/or explosions.
- Severe weather, such as a tornado.
- Hazmat incidents, either originating inside or outside a facility.
- Other incidents identified as hazards.

### Functional Exercises

A functional exercise is the simulation of an event that:

- Involves various levels of government, owners and operators, and emergency management personnel.
- Involves trained personnel “acting out” their actual roles.
- Evaluates internal capabilities and responses of participants.
- Evaluates the coordination activities between participants.

### Full-Scale Exercises

A full-scale exercise is a multiagency, multijurisdictional, multidiscipline operations-based exercise involving functional personnel (e.g., critical infrastructure protection partners) and emergency or other responders (e.g., firefighters decontaminating mock victims).

To test critical infrastructure protection plans using functional or full-scale exercises, planners may wish to inquire about upcoming communitywide exercises. In addition to exercising specific procedures and policies, these large-scale exercises can provide owners and operators with an opportunity to test how their own planning fits into community plans.