

Seven Emergency Preparedness Exercises for Health Agencies

The [Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program](#) (HSEEP) is a structured framework to uniformly design, test, evaluate, and train people who prepare for and respond to diverse health crises. This [adaptable framework](#) can apply to many situations including infectious disease control, environmental health, and healthcare facility management. HSEEP encompasses seven exercise types that are either discussion-based or operations-based.

If you want to:

Familiarize participants with current plans, policies, agreements, and procedures...

You should:

Use **Discussions-Based Exercises**

For example:

- **Seminar:** An informal discussion to orient participants to new or updated plans, policies, or procedures (e.g., Evacuation Standard Operating Procedure).
- **Workshop:** Leveraged to build specific products, such as a draft plan or policy (e.g., a workshop used to develop a Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan).
- **Tabletop Exercise (TTX):** Key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting to assess plans, policies, and procedures.
- **Game:** A simulation of operations often involving two or more teams, usually in a competitive environment, using rules, data, and procedures to depict an actual or assumed real-life situation.

If you want to:

Validate plans, policies, agreements, and procedures, clarify roles and responsibilities, and identify resource gaps in an operational environment...

You should:

Use **Operations-Based Exercises**

For example:

- **Drill:** A coordinated, supervised activity to test a specific function within a single entity (e.g., a fire department conducts a decontamination drill).
- **Functional Exercise (FE):** Examines high-level coordination between various multi-agency coordination centers (e.g., emergency operation center). A functional exercise does not involve first responders or other “boots on the ground.”
- **Full-Scale Exercise (FSE):** A multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline exercise involving functional (e.g., emergency operation centers) and “boots on the ground” response (e.g., firefighters decontaminating mock victims).

To learn more about preparedness training and evaluation, visit the [FEMA Preparedness Toolkit: HSEEP](#).

Email preparedness@astho.org for additional resources and guidance.