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.