Exercise Design and Administration:

Just the Basics

Kerry Fosher
Northern New England MMRS
2005

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to help you think through the decisions you need to make about exercise design and administration. It will also give you ideas on how to make the documents you need to implement those decisions. I recognize that the formal guidelines set out in other places may not always be realistic for reasons of time, staffing, or money. I hope that this document will help you think through the critical planning issues and get the most out of whatever resources you can muster. Throughout, you will find that I emphasize the need for you to develop your own system of exercise planning, one that meets your needs and can be truly effective without adding a lot to existing organization or resources. If you can read nothing else, read the segment called "Early Decisions" located in the section on Planning Committees. It will set you on the course to having clearly defined goals, responsibilities, expectations, and reporting.

This document does not replace guidance provided by other agencies. It is intended to help you think through your exercise process, which may include the need to follow specific guidelines from regulatory or granting organizations*. It is divided into 12 sections.

1. **RECORD KEEPING**
2. **STAKEHOLDERS**
3. **PLANNING COMMITTEES**
4. **DESIGN**
5. **OBJECTIVES**
6. **PUBLIC INFORMATION**
7. **SCENARIO**
8. **EVALUATION**
9. **CONTROL**
10. **EXERCISE SUPPORT AND FACILITATION**
11. **EXERCISE INFORMATION PACKETS**
12. **ASSESSMENT AND INTEGRATION OF RESULTS**

Each section contains suggestions for planning and documentation, but you will certainly find other things that need tracking. The suggestions should be used as starting points. Depending on your needs, you may want to adapt other organizations' materials or create your own planning documents. The most important thing is that the information is captured in a form that exercise planners can easily use and update.

* The Office for Domestic Preparedness, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and other organizations have produced very thorough sets of guidelines and forms. Even if you are not required to use them, you will benefit from reviewing them.

Sections

1. Record Keeping and Exercise Supplies

Everyone working on the exercise will have plenty of things competing for attention. A little upfront work to keep things organized can keep small problems from turning into big ones as the planning process progresses.

Create a Master Planning File. One of the easiest ways to do this is to use plastic accordion files, but binders are a less expensive option. Depending on the size of your exercise, you may end up using a portable file box or multiple binders, whatever is easiest for you and other planners.

The file can be divided into the following sections, but you should reorganize and add sections in whatever way makes sense for your exercise circumstances.

Create a Master Planning File.

- **Exercise Stakeholder List and Contact Information**
- **Planning Committee Membership**
- **Design**
- **Objectives**
- **Public Information**
- **Scenario**
- **Evaluation**
- **Control**
- **Exercise Support and Facilitation**
- **Exercise Information Packets**
- **Assessment and Integration of Results**

The last nine sections should have places for:

- **instructions and guidance related to that section from various sources: this document, FEMA materials, regulatory agencies, etc.**
- **templates, boilerplate, and examples from various sources**
- **people information–contacts and work group lists**
- **planning notes and task lists** (save the old ones at least until the exercise is over)
- **document drafts** (save the old ones at least until the exercise is over)
- **document final versions**
- **notes for the After Action Report**

Keeping electronic versions of drafts and final documents is a good way to preserve them for future use. If carefully collected, they can also be a resource for other organizations planning exercises. A few cautions:

① Every file should have the date (and possibly somebody's name) in the header.

② Final drafts should have the exercise name, date, and the word "final" in the footer.

③ If possible, use file names that will make sense over time, "SafetyBrief21Feb04.doc" instead of "Briefingdraft.doc"

You may also want to create two exercise "kits," one for meetings and one for the day itself. Kits should contain things that you may need that may not be provided at the location where you are meeting or exercising. We have found the following items useful.

Meeting Kit

- sharpie makers
- scissors
- stapler and staples
- pens
- pencils
- highlighters
- white board markers and eraser
- blank paper
- scotch tape
- masking tape
- post-its
- poster tube for saving flip chart pages
- extra cds for burning
- clips

Field Kit

sharpie markers

thick black markers

large paper or card-board for signs

duct tape

masking tape

post-its

scissors

stapler and staples

pens

pencils

clips

small notebooks

pocket knife

disposable/inexpensive camera with film

food bars

throat lozenges

mints

gel sanitizer

bandaids

eyeglass repair kit

rubber bands

safety pins

latex gloves

spare (borrowable) windbreaker

spare (borrowable) pair of sunglasses

extra name badges

2. Stakeholders

The entire exercise process from design to objectives to after action reporting is based on the needs of the stakeholders. While most exercise planners think about stakeholders as the agencies or departments directly involved, there are other possibilities. Below are some of the categories you should consider.

Participating Agencies and Departments

Funding Agencies

Regulatory Agencies

Organizations, businesses, and individuals donating time, food, supplies, space, or services

PIOs of organizations providing volunteers

Elected Officials and their PIOs

Community Organizations

Schools

Media

Other state, local, and federal agencies that may want to send observers

Industry sectors that may want to send observers

The needs of organizations in these categories may fall at different points in the process. One stakeholder might need something particular evaluated. Another may be concerned about the final report. One might just want to be sure it is acknowledged in exercise materials. Another may want to be sure its community has adequate warning about exercise activities.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

- list of potential stakeholders
- contact information and needs of known stakeholders
- copies of correspondence or notes on conversations
- lists of agreements made

3. Planning Committees

All exercises have a group of people responsible for the overall development and monitoring of exercise planning, operations, and reporting. This group is called a variety of things—Development, Design, Oversight, or Steering. In this document, it is referred to as the Oversight Committee. Large exercises generally require a number of groups (committees, teams, work groups—whatever label you want to use) to handle the details of certain aspects such as media, scenario development, safety and public outreach, exercise support, etc. In this document, these groups are referred to as "committees," with the term "team" used for groups that operate during the exercise, as opposed to during the planning.

What you call them and how you want to organize them is up to you. However, without some forethought, it can be difficult to keep abreast of the work these groups are doing, creating a situation that can lead to duplication or tasks left undone.

Make subgroup responsibilities and the role of group leadership concrete. The rough outlines of these responsibilities will not change much from exercise to exercise and can be saved as boiler-plate.

Get group leaders to accept responsibility for a certain amount of activity and accomplishment or, if they can't manage it, at least to let the Steering Committee know that there is a problem. This may be as simple as saying. "I'm hoping you'll agree to lead the group on Public Information. What we need is for you to arrange a meeting with these folks and anyone else you think is necessary, start assessing the outreach needs for the exercise, and get back to the Steering Committee at our meeting on Oct 21st." Just putting together the group is not enough, you need to give somebody a purpose and a time to report back.

A Note on Names

Each set of exercise guidance has different names for the various groups that plan an exercise. (For example: Oversight vs Steering, Committees vs Workgroups.) Most recently, the Office for Domestic Preparedness has renamed and reorganized functions to mirror Incident Command System sections.

In this document, I have chosen to use names that describe what the group members need to get done. This should allow the reader to map the functions onto any set of names without disrupting their internal exercise planning process.

Exercise Oversight Committee

Some common groups and responsibilities include:

EXERCISE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

- set up and manage activities of subgroups
- develop financial support for the exercise
- foster necessary buy-in from organizations and elected officials
- determine which parts of the exercise are for testing and which are for learning
- develop objectives
- develop overall exercise timeline
- recruit controllers, evaluators, facilitators, and other volunteers or clearly delegate parts of this responsibility to other groups
- create and maintain records needed for exercise planning, administration, and After Action Reports
- review, revise, and approve scenario, exercise support, press plan, controller plan, and evaluation strategy
- ensure legal concerns are addressed (with special attention to volunteer-related liability issues and safety concerns)
- arrange kick-off briefing and hotwash
- design information packets for controllers, evaluators, facilitators, participants, observers, and the press
- design and produce After Action Report

Exercise Support

See also Section 10

EXERCISE SUPPORT

- identify areas where facilitation may be necessary (moving observers from one location to another, helping people find restrooms or food, making sure people know where to turn in their evaluation forms, etc.)
- develop exercise safety plan
- identify needs and develop solutions for
  - facilities and equipment
  - observation areas and narration equipment
  - signage
  - food, sanitation, and transport
  - communication among exercise staff
  - general supplies
- arrange for status boards and updater where needed
- work with Oversight Committee to produce information packets
- develop a plan to manage volunteers (facilitators, "victims," simulators, evaluators, etc.) during the exercise, in consultation with other committees

PUBLIC INFORMATION

- work with agency PIOs to guide real press coverage of the exercise before and during
- develop plan for management (including staging) of the real press representatives during the exercise
- develop plan and materials for public outreach regarding the exercise
- work with exercise support on signage
- work with exercise support and controllers on information for volunteers
- develop exercise narration strategy for press and observers
- work with agency PIOs to determine what procedures they want to exercise
- develop plan for press "play" during the exercise for the Scenario Committee
- maintain records of all press and public information aspects of the exercise

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

- develop scenario that addresses as many exercise objectives as possible
- work with Oversight Committee to resolve conflicts between objectives
- work with participating agencies to determine the feasibility of play
- articulate the artificialities and injects that will be necessary to move the scenario along
- develop the "play" segment of the exercise timeline including injects
- help develop plan for the controllers during the exercise

Public Information

See also Section 10

Scenario Development

See also Section 10

Control

See also Section 10

Evaluation

See also Section 10

CONTROL

(based on decisions about the degree of free-play vs. scripting made by the Oversight Committee)

- with the Oversight and Scenario Committees, determine the scope of authority for controllers and write an explanation of it for the morning briefing
- with Scenario Committee, determine the physical locations controllers may be needed for injects, breaks, briefings, or to keep the exercise on track
- with Scenario Committee, develop planned inject materials
- brainstorm about times in the exercise where un-scripted control activities may be needed and present possible actions to the Oversight Committee
- recruit control team for approval by Oversight Committee
- work with Scenario Committee to develop the control plan

EVALUATION

(based on the testing/learning decisions made by the Exercise Oversight Committee, the objectives, and any regulatory needs)

- in consultation with affected agencies, develop points of review for operational objectives
- develop focus points and questions for other types of objectives
- assess how many evaluators of which types will be needed to adequately cover the exercise
- develop appropriate evaluation instruments for the different types of observers
- work with the Oversight Committee to ensure that the evaluation strategy will provide information needed for the After Action Report
- work with the Oversight Committee to ensure that the evaluation strategy will provide information needed to fulfill legal, regulatory, or certification requirements

All committees should expect to make contributions to the After Action Report based on their planning experiences and their assessment of the exercise itself.

Other committees can be developed as needed, but it is generally better to keep the number of groups small. It is better to increase the number of people in the group than to increase the number of groups.

Inclusion is more important than efficiency. **Resist the natural impulse to keep *decision-making* groups small. While small groups are more efficient in the short term, the decisions they make are sometimes not effective in the long-term.** Sometimes small breakout groups are necessary just to get something done, but the results of those meetings should be brought to the larger groups for final decisions.

Make a **substantial effort to reach out to organizations not always included in the planning of an exercise.** It is easy to send one email and call it a day. Instead, make the effort not only to contact other agencies, but also to provide avenues for them to communicate their needs and capabilities for the exercise.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

- contact lists for each committee
- contact list for interested parties (possible observers, volunteers, etc.)
- description of committee responsibilities and known deadlines
- exercise information packet for new participants

Resist the natural impulse to keep decision-making groups small.

While small groups are more efficient in the short term, the decisions they make are sometimes not effective in the long term.

4. Design

OVERSIGHT

As described above, the Oversight Committee is responsible for maintaining the overall direction and momentum of exercise planning. They also bear the final responsibility for making sure that regulatory concerns are addressed, adequate financial support is maintained, and an After Action Report is produced in a timely manner.

Oversight Committee members can establish a stable baseline for the exercise by answering a few seemingly simple questions before the planning goes too far. Some groups find it helpful to keep brief versions of their final answers at the front of their planning binders as a way of orienting other activities toward the main goals of the exercise.

Who is responsible for getting things done?

EARLY DECISIONS

WHO IS RESPOSIBLE FOR GETTING THINGS DONE?

EXERCISE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Exercise Oversight Committee should be a relatively small group of individuals, ideally not more than 10. However, each stakeholder organization wishing to have a say in the way the exercise is designed and run should be represented. If the objectives or scenario change during the planning process, Oversight Committee membership should be expanded to include any new stakeholders.

Members should be individuals who are able to devote significant time to the planning and administration of the exercise including monitoring activities of the subgroups and developing the scenario, control strategy, evaluation strategy, press plan, etc.

Members must also be willing to spend time on developing financial support for exercise activities and obtaining buy-in from high-level stakeholders such as agency heads and elected officials.

Members should make a Review and Approval Agreement very early in the planning process if not following some other program of Project Management that ensures smooth decision-making. The Review and Approval Agreement is simply a *brief* statement of how the committee will make decisions—how long people must be given to review documents before their approval is assumed, how many committee members must be present to make a decision, etc. The idea is to make sure everyone is on the same page, not to create a rigid structure.

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS EXERCISE?

MOTIVATIONS

Almost all exercises spring from a mix of motivations—a hope of improving preparedness, the need to meet a regulatory requirement or please a political supporter, the desire to try out new equipment or techniques. It is almost always better to acknowledge all the motivations as openly as possible. Doing so will help ensure that the exercise meets needs.

TESTING VERSUS LEARNING

It is also critical to be clear about the kind of exercise you will be holding. Many sets of exercise guidance describe different types of exercises—orientations, tabletops, drills, functional, and full-scale. However, most planners find that the reality of the exercise cycle sometimes forces them to combine aspects of these different types into a single exercise. Rather than force an exercise to fit an existing category perfectly, it is often more important to articulate very clearly what things are being tested versus those that are simply being practiced.

Some exercises must function as *tests* of some part of an organization's preparedness for political, regulatory, or practical reasons. In other cases, the primary purpose of the exercise is to run through various systems and procedures to *learn* about them and identify gaps and strengths for future work. There is evaluation all along the scale from learning to practice to testing, but the kinds of information gathered are somewhat different.

Exercise stakeholders must decide early on which parts of the exercise are for testing (if any) and which parts are for learning. The design of the exercise, the evaluation strategy, the administration of the exercise, and the way findings are reported all flow from these decisions.

In an exercise where a particular system is being *tested*, a participant who fails to follow a procedure simply fails to follow the procedure and this finding is noted by the evaluator for the After Action Report. If the same system is being *practiced* for *learning* purposes, a controller may step in and make a suggestion to the participant so that the correct procedure can be learned (the evaluator would still note the problem since it indicates a need for further training, but he or she would also look at how the participant corrected the error).

Once these decisions have been made, it is important to com-

Exercise stakeholders must decide early on which parts of the exercise are for testing (if any) and which parts are for learning.

The design of the exercise, the evaluation strategy, the administration of the exercise, and the way findings are reported all flow from these decisions.

After Action Reports

Who needs to see it and what information/format do they need?

Are there any groups that can receive the same version of the report?

Will the report be anonymous?

When and by whom?

What goes in it?

municate them clearly to exercise participants and staff. In a testing situation, it may be necessary to hide certain aspects of the scenario from participants, whereas that would not be as critical in a learning exercise. Obviously, a learning exercise can be less stressful for participants, but it also means that they will be expected to contribute to the assessment rather than passively await an evaluator's judgment.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH WHAT YOU FIND OUT?

AFTER ACTION REPORTS

To save work after the exercise, when everyone's energy and interest is at a low, make some basic decisions about the kinds of reports you will generate from the exercise. There will generally be more than one type, although they will use the same information. These range from a brief report on the benefits of the exercise to a highly technical evaluation for a regulatory agency or review board. It is always better to assess this sort of thing before the exercise so that you can be sure you collect the information you will need for your reports. Some questions to consider:

Who needs to see it and what information/ format do they need?

Consider regulatory agencies, political offices, the press, agency leaders, participants, planners, trainers, and information sharing associations.

Are there any groups that can receive the same version of the report?

For example, you might need to give only select information to a regulatory agency or the press, but participants, planners, trainers, and agency leaders can probably work from the same report.

Will the report be anonymous?

There are two kinds of anonymity—that of the evaluator and that of the participant. Exercise designers should decide in advance if individuals' names are going to be directly connected to identified problems/best practices.

When and by whom?

Who is responsible for collecting the needed information and synthesizing it into the final report?

Who has to review it before it is released?

What are the deadlines—for people to submit their evaluations and comments? for the draft for review? for the reviewers to return comments? for the final report to be released?

Who is responsible for ensuring that lessons learned are incorporated into the planning process? (The Corrective Action Plan)

What goes in it?

Setting aside reports for regulatory agencies, After Action Reports can take whatever format is useful to the exercise stakeholders. There are, however, some organizational standards that help make a useful report. These are discussed in the After Action Section of this document.

OTHER KEY ISSUES

RECOGNIZE FIELD KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR DESIGN AND EVALUATION

When you think about what you want to assess in the exercise **acknowledge the critical importance of the hands-on skill of responders.** Don't let people fall into the trap of thinking that an organization can provide an incident commander with a specific plan for every contingency. Make sure their creative skill is documented.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Regulatory issues will vary depending on the agencies involved in the exercise. Possible sources of regulatory issues include granting agencies, accreditation and licensing organizations/boards, state, local, or federal laws, and voluntary associations. Requirements may be very general, such as an obligation to conduct an exercise of an emergency plan. They may also be very specific, detailing which skills and procedures must be tested and how they must be evaluated.

It is critical that each agency's regulatory needs be **identified, written down, and shared** early in the design process so that the objectives, scenario, control plan, evaluation instruments, and After Action Reports adequate address them.

Not everything fits on an evaluator's checklist. Recognize Field Knowledge and Creativity in Your Design and Evaluation

Acknowledge the critical importance of the hands-on skill of responders.

Finances

Try to keep planning and preparedness expenses separate from exercise expenses.

Consult with supporters about their documentation needs early in the process.

Seek material, as well as financial support.

Assess and address personnel and backfill costs as early as possible.

Give credit to supporters.

Keep track of lessons learned.

FINANCES

Financial planning and documentation will depend on the complexity of the exercise and the sources of funding. However, there are a few general points that apply to all exercises.

Try to keep planning and preparedness expenses separate from exercise expenses.
This can be very difficult, as exercises tend to be when many planning issues get worked out and gaps in supplies are discovered. However, combining these expenses can make exercises seem much more costly than they really are both in terms of funds and person-hours. Whenever it is possible to tease the two types of expense apart, make the effort.

Consult with supporters about their documentation needs early in the process.
It's better to find out a supporter's accounting needs before you start spending their money. Where possible, get their needs in writing or send them a note explaining how you plan to document expenditures.

Seek material, as well as financial support.
Organizations that are unable to give funds may be able to provide supplies of some sort. Local businesses may be willing to provide food, supplies, or services as a public service. Space may also be donated for exercise use.

Assess and address personnel and backfill costs as early as possible.
Exercise participants and staff are taken from other full-time jobs. Their person hours and the hours of their replacements may require special funding or accounting. It is best to address these issues early in the exercise so that departments don't have to back out at the last minute due to staffing issues.

Give credit to supporters.
List ALL supporters on exercise documents, whether their contribution is in the form of funds, material, or space. Lists of supporters should appear on the welcome letter in each exercise packet, in any press briefings, and in all versions of the After Action Report.

Keep track of lessons learned.
Make sure that you keep at least an informal (or private) list of lessons learned in the financial realm. If an agency was particularly sticky about paperwork, that might be useful to know at the start of the next exercise. Likewise, if a business was particularly enthusiastic about giving support, that would be worth remembering for the next event.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

- **list of r**egulatory requirements by agency
- see Objectives section
- Organizationally appropriate accounting documentation
- List of all financial and material supporters for acknowledgement on the day of the exercise, in press reports, and in the After Action Report
- List of desirable, but not critical items/services to purchase if additional funding becomes available

Objectives should be based on a realistic assessment of needs and opportunities, including those determined by external forces, such as regulatory bodies.

5. Objectives

Exercise objectives may be in flux until the exercise design process is fairly far along. While objectives should drive the scenario as much as possible, the reality is messier. Some objectives may preclude others. World events may dictate a change in emphasis. Many things can affect the final mix. You can minimize the confusion by being very clear and honest about the importance of each objective.

Before setting out any objectives, each agency should do the following to assess their externally-determined needs:

① identify any regulatory or funding organizations that will need to review exercise results

② give some thought to other possible uses for exercise information. Consider whether there might be other funding streams or other certifications that can be obtained if certain exercise objectives are met.

③ review the information each organization needs

④ get copies of any evaluation or reporting formats they request or require

⑤ make a checklist (or whatever organizational tool suits you) that you can check periodically to make sure changing exercise scenarios, evaluation strategies, and documents still meet externally-determined needs.

Large-scale exercises have multiple sets of goals, objectives, and points of review. Everyone will be less confused if these are articulated clearly. Minimally, these could be described as:

strategic objectives—political, regulatory and long term organizational needs

> is there something that an elected official or agency head needs to see? are there any regulatory or grant requirements that must (or could) be met? what are the long-range goals of the organizations involved and what specific contributions to these goals will each organization need to get out of the exercise?

systems objectives (including plans)—incident command, communications, things going on in the EOC, inter-agency issues

> what communication systems and procedures need exercise?, do any agencies need to work on NIMS? are there new plans that need to be exercised or tested? are there ways to check on how different agency's plans interact? what inter-agency protocols need to be assessed?

operational objectives—front line decision making and skill demonstrations, similar to what would be seen in a drill, each agency may have separate sets along with the overall set for the exercise, each operational objective may be broken down into sets of "points of review." These are concrete, observable actions that can be recorded by an evaluator.

> what skills or procedures need to be tried out? does any agency need to measure the effects of its training programs in a particular area? are there any new types of equipment that should be tested?

Different kinds of objectives will be determined at different times. Ideally, Oversight Committee members should try to come up with a rough list of each type of objective early on and push it out to their organizations for comment.

Note: *In the build-up to the exercise, these different kinds of objectives need to be simply and clearly communicated to participants to obtain buy-in and to provide a shorthand for why certain things are being done ("oh- that's a strategic objective thing"—or—"well, that artificiality is there so we can exercise some of our operational objectives").*

Types of Objectives

strategic objectives

systems operational

operational objectives

CRITICAL VS IDEAL OBJECTIVES

Keep in mind that the different agencies involved may have somewhat different objectives in each of these sets. Part of exercise administration is defining a common set and, to whatever degree possible, providing opportunities for agencies to work on their own distinct objectives. (They may work on these as part of the primary exercise or choose to run exercises of their own "on the side" in coordination with the primary one.) Similarly, planners should be encouraged to categorize their objectives as "critical" or "ideal." These distinctions will help scenario designers make trade-offs when necessary (for example, if the design must involve a plane crash in a potato field, it may not be easy to work police boats into the scenario). The ultimate goal is to have a scenario that encompasses all of the necessary objectives and as many others as possible.

POINTS OF REVIEW

For many exercises, some of the objectives are further broken down into "points of review." These are the expected actions of decisions associated with an objective that can be assessed by an evaluator.

For example, if your objective is to assess the effectiveness of a notification system, your points of review might include: "decision to notify made by the designated person and in a timely manner," "sufficient staff tasked to carry out notifications," "sufficient equipment provided," "contact information was correct," and "follow-up procedures for failed contacts were in place and known to staff." Such objectives may also be highly technical, focusing on very specific points of knowledge or technique.

WHEN POINTS OF REVIEW ARE NOT POSSIBLE

Not all objectives can be easily broken down into points of review, but an attempt should be made to think through what that objective would look like on the ground. For example, if an objective is to build responder confidence in the use of PPE, exercise planners may have a hard time coming up with a measure of confidence. That does not mean that no information can be gathered, just that it may not be as easy to articulate. It may even be as simple as "participants report feeling confident in the use of their dosimeters" or "participants report difficulty seeing dosimeter readout when in turn out gear" or "qualified evaluators report that dosimeters are used correctly and with confidence." If you make no headway with that process, you may need to rethink and clarify that particular objective.

OBJECTIVES DON'T NEED TO YIELD QUANTITATIVE DATA TO BE USEFUL

Almost any objective can be translated into valuable data, so long as you do not try to make it seem less subjective than it really is. It's better to be up front about the type of information you are likely to collect.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create.

External Concerns Checklist(s)

Attach copies of any required formats or documents.

- **Common Exercise Objectives**

  Where possible, include a POC for each objective in case people in the sub-committees have questions:

  Strategic (to whatever degree that they can be written down) Objectives

  Systems Objectives

  Operational Objectives

- **Agency Specific Objectives**

  Where possible, include a POC for each objective in case people in the sub-committees have questions:

  Systems Objectives

  Operational Objectives

NOTE: *If agencies are conducting extended exercise operations or "on the side" exercises, the Exercise Oversight Committee should make a substantial effort to gather documentation of those side activities so that they are well coordinated with planning and operations for the primary exercise.*

NOTE: *Specific points of review will appear in the evaluation instrument and need not be reproduced in this section.*

Be sure to distinguish between public information that is part of exercise *play* and public information *about* the exercise.

6. Public Information

There are several different aspects to public information for exercises:

① the press policy for exercise participants

② trying out or testing the press management system for actual incidents as a part of the exercise in real or simulated form depending on the scenario, including "play" outreach to the public, the press, and elected officials

③ real outreach regarding the exercise to the public, the press, and elected officials, before, during, and after the exercise

④ management of the real press and observers during the exercise (in conjunction with the Exercise Support Committee)

⑤ development of exercise narration strategy with the Scenario and Exercise Support Committees

⑥ working with the Oversight Committee on the pre- and post-exercise briefings and statements

⑦ contributing to the After Action Report

PRESS POLICY FOR EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

The PIC must also work with the Oversight Committee and Controllers to develop an Exercise Press Policy.

Will participants, evaluators, and controllers be allowed to speak freely to the press?

If not, how should they respond to inquiries?

How will this policy be communicated to the participants and to the press?

How will breaches of the policy be handled?

EXERCISING PUBLIC INFORMATION PLANS

Almost all exercises should test or try out some aspects of public information plans, either outreach to the public or press management or both. However, these elements of the exercise are frequently not included as part of the exercise plan. Members of the Public Information Committee (PIC) should work with agency PIOs to ensure that public information-related objectives are known to the Oversight and Scenario Committees.

Recruiting people to play the press, the public, and elected officials during an exercise can present a logistical challenge, so resist the temptation to leave this aspect of exercise planning until the end.

PUBLIC OUTREACH ABOUT THE EXERCISE

Every exercise affects non-participants in some way. Public outreach can provide necessary information to the surrounding community throughout the exercise cycle. It can also be a way to use the exercise as an educational opportunity for the public, the press, and elected officials.

Minimally, people in areas where effects of the exercise will be visible or audible need to be advised so that they do not panic. Ideally, the exercise can serve as a way to inform the public about preparedness and build good will toward the agencies involved.

Do not rely on local press to inform the public of the exercise in advance. Other news may preempt any coverage they plan. Advertisements, fliers, signs, and arrangements with community centers may be necessary.

Keep track of problems and successes in public outreach, as well as ideas for plans or boilerplate that could make future exercises and incidents go more smoothly. Keep copies of significant drafts as well as final versions of outreach materials so that you capture the planning process as well as its results. Keep copies of all press coverage of the event.

The committee should consider the following categories of information:

- outreach to impacted neighborhoods
- outreach to interested political figures
- outreach and guidance to press
- lessons learned for the After Action Report

Exercising Public Information Plans

The pep rally matters.

EXERCISE BRIEFINGS

Pre- and post-exercise briefings and statements vary depending on the size and exposure of the exercise. Minimally, the pre-exercise briefing provides safety and logistical information and the post-exercise briefing tells everyone where to turn in equipment and reports. In more elaborate exercises, they may involve statements from agency heads or political leaders and separate briefings for evaluators, controllers, volunteers, and participants.

However, these opening and closing gatherings are also important focal points for everyone involved. They not only provide important information, but also develop the atmosphere of the exercise. **The pep rally matters.** If possible, do a closing statement as well as an opening one. Say over and over again that if everything went smoothly, there wouldn't be a reason to have an exercise. Make sure both participants and observers know that the whole idea is to expose problems and work on them. Follow up with participants. Praise their participation and request comments for the After Action Report.

PRESS AND OBSERVER MANAGEMENT DURING THE EXERCISE

The PIC should work closely with the Exercise Support Committee to plan for managing press and observers during the exercise. While you may learn some lessons from managing the press and observers during the exercise, it is not the same process as managing coverage of an actual incident. Make sure that the Oversight and Scenario Committees maintain this distinction.

It may not be possible to get a complete list of observers and attending press prior to the exercise. The PIC should stay in close contact with the Oversight Committee to get the most updated list possible.

> **Important:** *If an involved agency or facility has special security needs, it will affect how flexible exercise staff can be with regard to observers and press. The PIC should monitor security needs through the Scenario and Exercise Support Committees. They should request guidance from the Oversight Committee regarding gathering necessary information in advance and what to do with last-minute attendees.*

PHYSICAL MANAGEMENT OF THE PRESS AND OBSERVERS

With the Exercise Support Committee the PIC should design a strategy for the physical management of the press and observers that addresses the following questions for each group:

- Where will they meet at the start of the exercise?
- Who will give the pre-exercise briefing(s) and where?
- Do they need any special ID or vest to be in the facility?
- What will be done with people who miss the briefing? (esp. as regards safety concerns)
- Where will they be during the exercise?
- If there is more than one location, how will they be able to move among locations?
- If the exercise involves a JIC, will they be allowed to see it in operation?
- How will they get access to water, shelter, and rest rooms?
- How and of whom will they be allowed to ask questions during the exercise? (just to the narrator or will they have access to others?)
- Will there be an outbrief? If so, where?
- What is the mechanism for vetting special requests that might need approval from Controllers?
- Are there any VIP observers who will need special access or attention?

Especially with political observers and the press present, the way information is managed can have a substantial impact on the agencies involved.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND NARRATION STRATEGY

Especially with political observers and the press present, the way information is managed can have a substantial impact on the agencies involved. For those directly involved in the planning process, it can sometimes be hard to step back and think of how things will look to an outsider. The PIC is responsible for developing informative materials as well as the information management and narration strategies. These strategies should be presented to other Planning Committees throughout the development process for their input.

The **information management strategy** should consider:

- How will the exercise press policy be communicated and enforced?
- What information will press and observers need in their pre-exercise briefing(s)?
- What information should they be given in paper form?
- Will observers be asked to provide feedback? If yes, how? (work with Evaluation and Exercise Support Committees)
- Can arrangements be made with the press to get copies of their coverage?
- Will any of the after action materials be made available to the press and observers? If yes, how should they follow-up to get copies?

Use handouts and other knowledge props.

- **What You Will See Today**
- **What You Will Not See Today**
- **Exercie Constraints**
- **How to Ask Questions During the Drill**
- **Where to Send Questions or Comments After the Drill**

Use handouts and other knowledge props. A double-sided bullet point list of artificialities, goals, and constraints will go a long way toward explaining things to observers and the press: What You Will See Today, What You Will Not See Today, Exercise Constraints, How to Ask Questions During the Drill, Where to Send Questions or Comments After the Drill.

The **narration strategy** should serve not only to keep people informed of basic exercise developments, but also to educate them in the exercise process and the preparedness activities of participating agencies. The PIC should work with the Scenario Committee and individual agencies to develop a plan addressing the following issues:

What agencies are involved?

What are the key objectives of the exercise?

What are the basic assumptions and context of the scenario?

What is the storyline of the scenario, including all possible injects?

What artificialities and simulations are being used? At what points should they be explained?

What equipment is being deployed and how is it being used?

What skills are being exhibited?

What new plans, procedures, or relationships are being exercised?

What actual world events can be used to illustrate the scenario?

Will agency spokespeople be available for occasional comments during play?

Of course, narrators should also have full knowledge of logistical information, such as the exercise schedule and the location of food, shelter, and restrooms.

Narrate more than you think you need to and use status boards if available. Observers have a lot of "down time" during exercises. Tell them again and again what is happening. Ask people for their questions and comments.

Include problem-solving in the narration. When a gap is encountered or a problem pops up, explain to observers how it is being worked around. It is important for them to realize that front-line people have to be creative to make things work, that nothing ever really goes by the book.

RESISTANCE TO PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

A final, but not insignificant, consideration for the PIC is helping participants understand the role of public information about the exercise and in an incident. Players may not feel comfortable having the press see them "practicing." This will be of particular concern in exercises that are exploring plans that are not yet formed or that involve equipment not yet familiar to everyone involved. The PIC will need to work with participants to strike a balance between public awareness and concerns about exposing weaknesses. That balance will probably not be satisfactory to all involved. It may be necessary to involve people higher up the chain of command to resolve any lingering disputes.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

- Exercise Constraints Handout
- Other Knowledge Props
- Public Outreach Materials about the exercise
- Press Management Strategy including location maps if necessary
- Information Management and Narration Strategy
- Ideas for handling participant resistance to public exposure

Resistance to Public Information Activities

The PIC will need to work with participants to strike a balance between public awareness and concerns about exposing weaknesses. That balance will probably not be satisfactory to all involved. It may be necessary to involve people higher up the chain of command to resolve any lingering disputes.

7. Scenario

Building the scenario is not simply a matter of setting out the "story." The scenario must be built from the objectives as much as possible. It will involve a back and forth process as participating organizations negotiate and renegotiate how various objectives fit or don't fit. Ultimately, the Oversight Committee (or whatever the highest level committee is) has the responsibility to approve or reject the scenario, so particularly difficult negations may need to be handed off to them for resolution.

The scenario must be built from the objectives as much as possible.

It will involve a back and forth process as participating organizations negotiate and renegotiate how various objectives fit or don't fit.

The key items to monitor in scenario development are the exercise objectives, the scripting process, and the degree of play versus simulation.

OBJECTIVES IN THE SCENARIO

People submitting objectives for inclusion in the scenario should be encouraged to provide the following additional information:

① whether or not the objective is essential (perhaps mandated by a regulation)

② a few points of review: observable actions or decisions that suggest what the objective will look like on the ground so that the Scenario Committee can be sure they understand how the objective is being conceptualized.

The Scenario Committee should maintain an up-to-date master list of objectives with notes describing how they are or are not being addressed in the scenario. This list can be as messy as it needs to be, but should always be kept current and ready to be explained to any exercise planner with questions.

SCRIPTING THE SCENARIO

The format of the scenario itself will vary depending on the size and scripting of the exercise. In an exercise where there is a lot of testing (as opposed to just learning), the scripting will probably be minimal. The unfolding of the scenario has to follow the actual decisions made by the participants. In exercises focused on learning rather than testing, there may be a more developed scenario that describes expected actions and provides ways for controllers to nudge participants back on course if they stray.

Most exercises have some combination of these two options. Players may be allowed to follow their own decisions and actions to a certain point or time and then brought back to the main line of the scenario during a break.

It is up to the Exercise Oversight Committee, in coordination with other committees, to decide the degree of scripting for various parts of the exercise. Again, it falls to the Scenario Committee to make sure that these decisions can be fit into a logistically feasible scenario and, if not, to suggest options to the Oversight Committee.

PLAY VERSUS SIMULATION

In all exercises, there are some things that are played out and others that are simulated in some way. Simulations may involve role-playing, such as when somebody simulates a member of the press. Other simulations may simply involve an inject, such as a note from a controller indicating that a certain telephone call has been received. Often simulations are used for actions that are not being exercised, call for personnel form outside the area, or involve expensive supplies.

The decision to simulate something rather than play it can affect how thoroughly certain objectives are met. It is also possible that one agency's decision to simulate something may have an effect on the play or simulation of another agency. Scenario developers must work very closely with all agencies and the Oversight Committee to ensure that the balance of play and simulation is clear and accepted at all levels. In particularly complex exercises, it may be beneficial to have all participating agencies or departments sign off on the Master Scenario to verify that they have reviewed and accepted all artificialities, timelines, and play expectations.

Beyond creating the basic scenario, there is some other information the committee should develop and document as the planning process moves on.

Scenario Context

The context of the scenario, whether real or simulated, is an important point of orientation for participants. You should build a description of:

- **the time of year and the weather**
- **the time of day**
- **other events happening in the region**
- **any seasonal population or traffic shifts that would be in effect**
- **local and world events (real or invented) that would affect decision-making**

Play Versus Simulation

recent media events—films, books, news coverage, etc., that would affect the public reaction to a hazardous incident of the type in the scenario.

Assumptions, Artificialities, and Injects

All exercises rely on some degree of artificiality. It's a good idea to document these for controllers, evaluators, and public information developers.

Assumptions are simply baseline context on which the exercise is built. They may include certain kinds of weather, full staffing, and the presence or absence of events competing for attention and resources.

Artificialities are deliberate omissions or substitutions made for reasons of safety, time, expense, or other concerns. Sometimes they are linked to activities being simulated in the scenario. Sometimes they are simply there for building context. Artificialities might include not actually wetting down "victims" during decontamination or putting only 10 people through a mass vaccination protocol instead of 100.

Another type of artificiality might involve squashing 2 days of events into only 1 day of exercising so that the clock has to be "reset" for all participants one or more times during play. Artificialities involving clock advancement can be done by inject, but are more frequently done at a break in the exercise, such as lunch, end of day, or shift change so that all participants can be informed of the change.

Injects (sometimes called "messages") are verbal or written events/changes that are provided to participants by controllers. Some injects are designed into the scenario as a way of introducing a new variable. An example of this type of inject is setting a time to have a controller hand a slip of paper to the "incident commander" telling her she has just received a phone call reporting a threat of a secondary device. Other injects might be created "on the fly" as a way to bring the exercise back to a particular direction without causing too much disruption to play.

The list of assumptions, artificialities, and known injects should be reviewed by the Oversight Committee and included in exercise information packets for evaluators, controllers, and others as appropriate. Known injects should be scripted in advance. If the controller is to give the inject in paper rather than verbal form, he or she should be provided with a pre-made card to hand to the player.

Master Scenario and Timeline

The master scenario (sometimes known as the Master Sequence of Events List or MSEL) combined with the exercise timeline includes both the logistical timeline of the exercise and the "play" timeline of the exercise. It lists all known key events including whether they are played or simulated. It provides information on artificialities and injects. This is the document that controllers use to keep the exercise on track and that evaluators use to know how to interpret what they observe.

Evaluator Contact and Tasking

Contact Name	Organization	Telephone	E-mail	Evaluation Area/Type	Notes

Other Scenario Descriptions and Timelines

Ultimately, you will end up with several different versions of the scenario. Some will be very detailed, such as the Master Scenario and Timeline. Others will be very brief and contain little more than the context and the first few events. Those will be given to participants and others who should not know the entire scenario before it unfolds.

Similarly, some people, such as observers need only basic timeline information. They need to know starting, breaking, and ending times, as well as the times of briefings. These timelines can simply be extracted from the master version and formatted more simply.

You should work with the Public Information Committee, the Exercise Support Committee, and the Controllers to develop any versions of the scenario and timeline they might need.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

- Scenario Timeline Grid with Injects
- Scenario Narrative (including context)
- Brief Scenario Narrative (for participants who can't know everything in advance)
- Exercise Timeline (administrative information for observers and participants- start and end times, briefing times, break times, etc.)
- Objectives in Scenario (a document that tracks – briefly- where exercise objectives are addressed in the scenario)
- List of other scenario versions requested by other committees
- Master Scenario

8. Evaluation

DHS produces a number of guides and sets of forms that can be used or adapted for evaluation. These guides can be used to produce a solid evaluation strategy and need not be reproduced here. The information in this section is designed to help manage information, evaluation staff, and circumstances that are not specifically addressed in other guidance.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF EVALUATION.

Different kinds of objectives lend themselves to different kinds of evaluation. While many objectives can be parceled out into points-of-review checklists, sometimes you want to capture things that just don't fit that format. For example, you may want to gather information on ways to improve coordination with another agency. Large-scale objectives of that sort tend to need more subjective, open-ended evaluation instruments so that evaluators can think creatively about what they see. Operational objectives sometimes lend themselves to checklists. Objectives dealing with systems may need a mix.

There are **two standards for evaluation:** the agency plan and/or the effectiveness of the action taken. The second type allows "good marks" for creative behavior, which might be penalized if evaluation only used the plan as a standard. (This distinction is of particular importance in multi-agency exercises. Evaluators should be encouraged to look at the effect of an action on inter-agency coordination, not solely on how it conforms to one agency's plan.)

Regulatory bodies may impose requirements on your evaluation strategy. These requirements may deal with the way a particular activity has to be evaluated, what forms must be used, who can conduct the evaluation, and/or how the evaluations must be reported. At the very beginning of developing the evaluation strategy and throughout the process, Evaluation Committee leaders should meet with Oversight Committee leaders to ensure that requirements will be met.

All of these issues need to be considered in developing your overall evaluation strategy. Each may require some alteration to any existing templates you have. Each should be described in some detail in the Evaluator's Packet to minimize confusion.

Regulatory bodies may impose requirements on your evaluation strategy.

These requirements may deal with

- **the way a particular activity has to be evaluated,**
- **what forms must be used,**
- **who can conduct the evaluation, and/or**
- **how the evaluations must be reported.**

A well-designed exercise can collect information from different types of evaluations, making the most of the available talent.

Five Types of Evaluators

① **Strategic / VIP**

② **Scarce Specialist**

③ **In-house**

④ **Standard**

⑤ **Players**

Also consider collection information from exercise planners, controllers, facilitators and observers.

Different Kinds of Evaluators

Many guidelines for exercise strategies call for the use of outside, objective evaluators. However, a perfectly objective evaluation is neither possible nor desirable. While the evaluation strategy should demonstrate that planners have tried to create a fair and accurate system, it should also address staffing realities and non-standard sources of evaluation.

Different people bring different capabilities to the scene. A well-designed exercise can collect information from different types of evaluations, making the most of the available talent. Evaluation strategies should include at least 5 types of evaluators.

① **Strategic** evaluators—VIPs from other locations who should be looking at big picture issues. They should be given lists of large-scale objectives in their packet and not constrained to any form unless they request it.

② **Scarce-Specialist** evaluators—people who have a rare skill or knowledge-base may need to function as players or controllers as well as evaluators. They should be given, in advance, lists of objectives to be thinking of during play and provided with material that will help them reconstruct their evaluations after the exercise is over.

③ **In-house** evaluators—people who are evaluating their own agencies or whose agencies are not playing, but want to think about how they might function. Let them use whatever forms they want and ask them to contribute something for the After Action Report. *The Evaluation Team is not responsible for providing materials to these evaluators, but may provide a copy of the Evaluators Packet as a courtesy. The Evaluation Committee should confer with the Oversight, Exercise Support, and Control Committees to determine what type of access these evaluators will receive and provide written copies to the individuals well in advance of the exercise.*

④ **Standard** evaluators—people familiar with the area and plans they are supposed to be watching. These people will conduct the "nitty-gritty" parts of evaluation, the checklists and points of review. They should have the exercise objectives and agency plans in hand at least a month before the exercise. They should have fairly specific evaluation instruments with points of review at least two weeks before. *According to some models, these individuals should be drawn from sources completely outside the system and oriented to the plans through training sessions. In reality, that is not always possible. The decision-process for choice of standard evaluators should be well documented in the evaluation strategy in case it is questioned later.*

⑤ **Players**—players should be given a way to contribute to the After Action Report, through a higher-up if that is appropriate to the rank structure. Complaints tend to decline if people are expected to be constructive with them.

Remember that, if your strategy is well designed, you can always add something to be evaluated at the last minute—nothing is carved in stone. Handing out information in advance just helps people have an idea of what they will be doing and forces you to think out how many evaluators you are really going to need.

The question of numbers is problematic. Ideally the evaluation team should have several evaluators for each checklist or set of questions. The duplication helps minimize bias and ensure that the maximum amount of data is captured. However, finding a sufficient number of trainable, available people for that kind of coverage is often impossible. Be systematic about developing your bare-minimum estimate and work up from that. Things to take into account as you make that first estimate:

required evaluations or formats—how many people are necessary to carry out what is required by regulatory bodies?

critical objectives—how many people are needed to see and record all the necessary perspectives and details for each critical objective?

dual-purpose evaluators—are there any situations in which an evaluator used for something that ends early in the exercise can be assigned another task at a later point?

If you find that the Evaluation Committee is unable to recruit appropriate evaluators for the bare-minimum tasks, you should contact the Oversight Committee immediately to discuss alterations in the exercise design or get help recruiting evaluators.

As you are recruiting evaluators, you should keep track of them and their areas of responsibility in a table like this.

Players should be given a way to contribute to the After Action Report, through a higher-up if that is appropriate to the rank structure. Complaints tend to decline if people are expected to be constructive with them.

Evaluator Contact and Tasking Info

Contact Name	Organization	Telephone	E-mail	Evaluation Area/Type	Notes

With the exception of regulatory requirements, your primary consideration for an evaluation instrument is that it be realistic.

The most comprehensive, detailed evaluation instrument has no value if your evaluators are not trained or will not have time to complete it.

EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Your evaluation instruments will vary depending on the type of evaluator and regulatory needs. For example, a player would not get the same evaluator package as a scarce-specialist would. Also, a person evaluating a regulated activity would probably have much more detailed instruments than a Strategic/VIP evaluator.

Instruments may include checklists, open-ended questions with blank space for lengthy comments, rating scales, any technique you feel will help you capture the information you need. Most evaluation instruments end up being some combination of different formats. Look over DHS's materials, and any exercise materials you can get from other agencies. Talk to other agencies about their exercises and learn what worked and what didn't.

With the exception of regulatory requirements, **your primary consideration for an evaluation instrument is that it be realistic.** The most comprehensive, detailed evaluation instrument has no value if your evaluators are not trained or will not have time to complete it. Focus on critical areas, separating off any items that evaluators should observe only if it will not detract form their primary goals.

A note on evaluation instruments for players. Of necessity, players can only conduct their evaluations after the action. Questions should encourage them to evaluate their own performance, the organization's performance or readiness, and the administration of the exercise. Focus should be on their needs (or the organization's needs) for improving their skills and knowledge rather than detailed accounts of what went wrong or right. Players should never be asked questions that appear to encourage them to critique the performance of a colleague. It may be necessary to conduct a briefing with players before they submit their evaluations to discuss their concerns about anonymity and what will be done with their submissions.

Whatever your choices, each version of the instrument should be part of a comprehensive evaluation instruction set in the Evaluator's Information Packet. The instruction set should include at least the following information:

- an introduction including a welcome, table of contents, means and deadlines for submitting evaluations, and the time frame in which analysis will be completed
- list of Evaluation Team members with assignments
- exercise goals and objectives
- evaluator conduct brief
- instrument instructions and special requests
- instruments.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

- **List of evaluator contact and tasking**
- **Ongoing notes about minimum evaluation requirements**
- **Ongoing notes about critical evaluation areas versus ideal evaluation areas**
- **Evaluation Plan including instruments**
- **Evaluation Information Packets**
- **Schedule of any Evaluator training or orientation sessions.**

Evaluation Materials for Players

Questions should encourage participants to evaluate

- **their own performance**
- **the organization's performance or readiness**
- **the administration of the exercise.**

Focus should be on their needs (or the organization's needs) for improving their skills and knowledge rather than detailed accounts of what went wrong or right.

9. Control

Controllers are responsible for the flow of the exercise. They give out injects and monitor the actual time against the master timeline. They make sure that the rules of conduct are observed and that artificialities and assumptions are maintained during play. Controllers call exercise breaks and time-outs. They provide briefings during the exercise and may contribute to the pre- and post-exercise briefings.

The Control Committee chooses the Control Team and develops the Control Plan for the Exercise. Team members should be familiar with the plans being exercised and thoroughly versed in the exercise objectives, scenario, timeline, and exercise support. Much of the information the committee needs to create the Control Plan is developed by the Scenario Committee; such as:

> Will the exercise be allowed to unfold naturally or will controllers need to keep people on track?
>
> If a player needs to be moved back to the script, will it be done directly or will the controller construct a message to unobtrusively point the individual in the right direction?
>
> Are there breaks or clock advancements that will need to be injected?
>
> What injects and messages are in the script and how are they to be provided?
>
> What is the procedure for creating messages during the exercise? Do controllers have autonomy to create them on the fly or do they need to have them approved by the lead controller.

Other elements that need to be included in the plan include:

AUTHORITY

> What are the procedures for calling a safety break? What about other kinds of breaks?
>
> How will controllers communicate changes to other exercise staff, including evaluators, facilitators, and narrators?
>
> How will breaches of exercise conduct be handled?

TASKING

Which controllers are responsible for which areas?

Are there any specific activities or times of concern in each area?

EVALUATION AND EXERCISE SUPPORT INFORMATION

What evaluators will need to be in which areas? What will be their interaction with controllers?

Where will volunteers be and who will be managing them?

Where will observers be and who will be managing them?

Will any special observers be given access to the area of play?

How can controllers take breaks if needed?

Where can they find food and water set aside for them?

If transportation among sites will be needed, how will it be provided?

How will controllers get their vests, radios, phones, and other equipment? How are these items returned?

Who are the other controllers and how can they be contacted? (This list should contain all the information in the table below)

Controller Contact Information

Contact Name	Organization	Telephone	E-mail	Control Area	Notes

Simulation

Often, the Control Team is given responsibility for managing Simulators in the exercise, so that those individuals are in line with the control plan. If this is the case, the Control Committee, must provide the Control Team with a written list of simulators with contact information and the details of their roles as a part of the control plan.

After Action

What information should controllers provide for the hotwash?

What information should controllers provide for the After Action Report? (At the very least, controllers should provide an evaluation of the control plan with suggestions for its improvement.)

Controllers must have the Control Plan several days in advance of the exercise so they can review it and become familiar with their roles. It may be necessary to fine tune elements of it at the last minute, but they should be given whatever is available, including contact information for other controllers, well ahead of time.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

- **Controller contact information and tasking**
- **Control Plan including texts of injects and messages.**
- **Simulator contact and role list.**
- **Schedule of any controller training or orientation sessions.**

10. Exercise Support and Facilitation

Exercise Support and Facilitation are the "catch-all" categories of exercise design and administration. The committee(s) responsible have the daunting task of working with every other committee and team to anticipate the physical, informational, security, and facilitation needs for every aspect of the exercise, from pre-exercise information distribution to after action, for every involved person including controllers, evaluators, players, simulators, other staff, observers, special observers, press, facility owners, and report writers.

The Exercise Support Committee is responsible for recruiting and training exercise facilitators (see below), developing the Exercise Support Plan, and monitoring the exercise to handle logistical issues as they arise. As part of the Exercise Support Plan, the committee should develop a Facilitation Plan to ensure that the running of the exercise goes smoothly. The controllers manage the play and pace of the exercise, facilitators should handle everything else.

Exercise Support personnel should also provide oversight to be sure that overall exercise plans include time for any necessary training and orientation sessions for controllers, evaluators, volunteers, and facilitators. They should work with the Scenario Committee to ensure that the Master Scenario and Timeline contain blocks of time for general orientation and safety briefings.

Exercise Enhancements (props, etc.) may be the responsibility of the Exercise Support Committee or the Scenario Committee. The degree of enhancement needed depends on the degree of simulation taking place, the space being used, and the available resources. It is up to the Exercise Director to decide which committee is better suited to handle these details. In either case, a detailed account of enhancements should be included in a Field Management section of the plan.

The type and location of the exercise, as well as the needs of the agencies involved will determine the contents of the Exercise Support Plan. In many cases, it may be no more than a collection of information about logistical elements including, but not limited to, the ones listed below.

Elements of Exercise Support

- Finances
- Food, shelter & sanitation
- Field management
- Facilitation
- Information management
- Safety
- Site access management

Other Aspects

- Distribution of advance materials
- Monitoring scheduling logistics
- Exercise enhancements
- Traffic management
- Parking
- Field supplies/kit
- Documenting the exercise
- Weather planning
- Vendor management

Try to keep exercise-specific costs separate from costs that can be attributed to general preparedness.

GENERAL

Finances

In the planning stages, the Exercise Support Committee must work with the other committees to develop an estimate of the costs associated with all aspects of running the exercise. In some situations, the Exercise Support Committee may also be tasked with managing document distribution and report printing and must account for these items when preparing the estimate. The estimate should be provided to the Oversight Committee, which bears the final responsibility for financial decisions.

The Exercise Support Committee is also responsible for working to bring exercise needs in line with available funds. Members should work with other committees, but must be given the authority to impose the limitations dictated by the Oversight Committee.

It may be the responsibility of Exercise Support staff to make sure that costs associated only with the exercise are kept separate from those attributable to general preparedness.

Food, Shelter, and Sanitation

All people involved with the exercise will need access to water, shelter, rest rooms, first aid, and (if provided) food. The Committee should assess the exercise sites for possible locations, taking into account the ability of various types of people to move about during the exercise, possible weather conditions, and event duration. Arrangements must be made to escort or transport people who cannot have uncontrolled access to the site or may need assistance.

Once locations for amenities and transportation/escort plans are determined, these should be marked on the maps made available to all exercise attendees and incorporated into the exercise briefings.

Exercise Support Committee members should work with other groups to ensure that mechanisms are in place for controllers, simulators, volunteers, evaluators, etc. to take breaks and access amenities.

Facilitators should be assigned to any group that will need transport or escort to get to any of the amenities. If large numbers of people or substantial distances are involved, assign more than one facilitator.

Field Management

Whether the exercise is to be help inside or outside, at facilities owned by the participants or not, or some mix, the Exercise Support Committee must make a plan for managing the "field" sites. This plan should account for:

- MOUs with facility owners or schedulers
- what are the expectations of all involved parties regarding use of facilities? (what will the facility supply? what amount of clean up is required?)
- time of use including set-up and cleanup
- exercise enhancements- what props will be used?, where?, when?, how will they be procured?, who will set them up?, who will clean them up later?, how will they be returned or disposed of?
- what are the planning, supply, and staffing needs for set up, clean up, and "scene changes" during the exercise?
- what are the planning, supply, and staffing needs for staging equipment and personnel?
- what are the planning, supply, and staffing needs for managing observers and the press?

Facilitation

Facilitation is what makes all the planning of the exercise come together without observers wandering into unsafe areas or controllers running out of coffee. Facilitators are the people who help make this happen. They should be familiar with the general support needs of the exercise, as well as their own tasks. They should also be provided with lists of attendees, so they know who is a controller vs an observer, etc. Some facilitation tasks are relatively mundane, such as making sure food is available. Others require a certain degree of diplomacy, such as escorting (or constraining) observers. For this reason, the Exercise Support Committee should think carefully about assignments, choosing appropriate people.

Some areas where facilitation can help:

- escorting observers and others when necessary
- checking amenities and replenishing when needed
- carrying messages
- running errands
- scene changes
- status board changes
- narration
- checking on the needs of fixed-position staff, such as controllers or evaluators

Some areas where facilitation can help:

- **escorting observers and others when necessary**
- **checking amenities and replenishing when needed**
- **carrying messages**
- **running errands**
- **scene changes**
- **status board changes**
- **narration**
- **checking on the needs of fixed-position staff, such as controllers or evaluators**

A final note, the role and authority of facilitators should be clear to them and to the attendees. Facilitators generally should not attempt to deal with awkward situations, but they must be made aware of how these situations can be resolved. There should always be a lead facilitator or controller to whom they can go for help.

Keep track of facilitators in a simple table like this.

Facilitator Contact Information

Contact Name	Telephone	E-mail	Tasking

Information Management

The overall strategy for Information Management will probably be developed by the Public Affairs Committee, but it is up to Exercise Support to help make that strategy work. Some things to consider:

- status boards and other static information props–creation, locations, updating
- public address systems and bullhorns—areas and times needed, training in use
- handouts—numbers, times and locations needed, format
- information packets/handbooks (see Exercise Information Packet Section)—assembly, distribution before and at the exercise

Safety

The Oversight Committee must designate a Safety Officer for the exercise, possibly one for each site in the exercise. These individuals are always part of the Exercise Support Committee, as their input is needed in all aspects of field management including people. These people should be trained in the safety procedures of the primary organizations involved and the facilities being used and develop a safety plan accordingly.

Aside from helping the Exercise Support People develop safe field sites and observation areas, the Safety Officers should make at least the following information available to all committees:

- procedures for calling an exercise break
- procedures for calling an exercise stop
- procedures for calling a real-world emergency
- plan for badges, vests, or other markers for staff and observers
- safety constraints in facility for equipment use
- list of (and/or map showing) restricted areas and equipment

Site Access Management

Some facilities or organizations require that all exercise attendees be badged or otherwise marked as cleared for being in the facility. Even when these restrictions are not in place, it is a good idea to plan some sort of site access management to keep control over the exercise.

When developing the plan, Exercise Support Committee members should consider:

- facility or organizational requirements for clearance and credentialing
- existing credentialing systems that might be used
- creation of exercise-specific credentials
- permits for vehicles
- perimeter monitoring or closure to restrict points of entry
- procedures for enforcing site access rules and handling breaches
- authority for enforcing site access rules and handling breaches
- first aid availability

Safety Officers should make at least the following information available to all committees:

procedures for calling an exercise break

procedures for calling an exercise stop

procedures for calling a real-world emergency

plan for badges, vests, or other markers for staff and observers

safety constraints in facility for equipment use

list of (and/or map showing) restricted areas and equipment

Miscellany

Every exercise will have unique miscellaneous logistical needs and these must be worked out by the planners for that specific exercise. However, a few miscellaneous items that don't neatly fit into the categories above include:

traffic management—for the area around the site, as well as in the site

parking—for various types of attendees

field kit—as described in the record keeping section of this guidance

documentation—recording and/or photographing the event

weather—contingency planning for possible adverse weather conditions

vendors—if any are coming, how they will be managed throughout the exercise.

People

The most complex part of exercise support is managing people. Each committee should be responsible for recruiting their team members, needed volunteers, observers, etc., but the Exercise Support Committee needs to keep track of it all. People need food, water, and rest rooms. They may need transportation and IDs. Since all of these items are the responsibility of the Exercise Support Committee, it is important that committee members work closely with other planners to ensure that they always have the most up to date figures.

Types of people to consider include: volunteers (simulators, etc.), observers, evaluation team, control team, other exercise staff, and facilitators. Also keep in mind that some VIP observers may need special arrangements or may be allowed less restricted access to the players.

VOLUNTEERS

In most cases, other committees will take care of the volunteers in the evaluation and control/simulation teams. However, the Exercise Support Committee should have names and contact information for all volunteers for safety reasons.

Most of the volunteers who will be the responsibility of the Exercise Support will be facilitators or those who volunteers to be "victims." Facilitation is covered above. For other volunteers, the Volunteer Management Plan should include:

- who is providing volunteers and how many and when
- will any need transportation to and from the exercise
- who is providing "symptom" and behavior guidance
- what are the moulage requirements
- what legal issues does the Oversight Committee need to address (liability, etc.)
- to whom can volunteers go in the exercise if they have a question
- how will they be staged, controlled, and released after play
- what, if anything, will they be asked to contribute to the After Action Report
- what is their meet-up point if the exercise is stopped
- who will give the volunteer briefing

Keep track of the volunteers in much the same way that you keep track of other attendees. With volunteers not employed by any participating organization, it is a good idea to include emergency contact information in case the volunteer is injured.

If one person will be managing a number of volunteers, only the primary contact need be listed **so long as you are sure** that a list of all volunteers and their contact information is available through that manager.

Volunteers

Contact Name	Emergency Contact Information	Telephone	E-mail	Tasking

Things to Consider for Observer Management

- restricted areas for viewing
- proximity to amenities
- shelter from weather
- escort and transportation to amenities or other exercise sites
- press-setup area, if they are being managed with the observers
- seating if appropriate
- knowledge props—posters and handouts
- narration and Q&A throughout entire event
- ease of exit at the end of the exercise
- safety briefing

OBSERVER MANAGEMENT

Managing the experience of observers can be almost as important as doing well in the exercise, depending on who is observing. This aspect of Exercise Support should be run as smoothly as humanly possible, as it is the physical representation of the organizations involved.

Keep track of who will be observing and their contact information. This may not always be necessary for credentialing, but it helps restrict access to areas of the exercise where the general public should not be unattended. Keep a list of people who need to receive the final list of observers, including what format they need. If you are not able to establish a final list of observers in advance (which is normal), make notes on the list indicating which organizations can be expected to send observers. If necessary for exercise security, make notes on what credentials those observers will be able to provide.

When developing the observer management plan, consider the following

- restricted areas for viewing
- proximity to amenities
- shelter from weather
- escort and transportation to amenities or other exercise sites
- press-setup area, if they are being managed with the observers
- seating if appropriate
- knowledge props- posters and handouts
- narration and Q&A throughout entire event
- ease of exit at the end of the exercise
- safety briefing
- observer information packet contents (see below)

When completing observer information handouts, try to keep it to one page, double-sided. If necessary, put the exercise schedule on a separate sheet with a map of the area. People will not read much. You should also cover everything again in the exercise startup brief and the Narrator or others assigned to facilitate observation should reiterate the information when possible.

Keep track of observers in a simple table including contact information, location(s) in which they want to observe, and (if needed) the credential they will present to gain access to the site.

Name	Affiliation	Contact #	Location(s)	Credential to be provided

Special Observers/Participants

A similar table is fine for special participants, so long as it contains or is linked to an explanation of what special arrangements these VIPs or other special participants will need.

Contact Name	Telephone	Email	Role or Interest	Location(s)	Credential to be provided	Special Arrange-ments

PEOPLE TO RECEIVE LIST OF OBSERVERS

Remember to keep track of the people who will need observer information on the day of the exercise. These people include gatekeepers, security personnel, controllers, facilitators, other exercise staff, facility owners, and possibly others. You should also make a note of how each person prefers to receive the list (see examples below).

Need observers

Name	Affiliation	Location	Preferred method to receive list
			Example: paper copy at morning exercise brief
			Example: E-mail to XXX
			Example: Fax to XXX

If there is chatter in the background, politely ask people to take it outside "for the benefit of those in the room who haven't had to listen to this a thousand times already who have a hard time hearing in a crowded environment."

FACILITATION AND SHOW

Administration does not stop on the day of the event. Some forethought and creative use of staff can help keep things moving smoothly. Some items may be handled by the Public Information Committee, but Support staff should help ensure that those plans will work well.

Use Facilitators. Get students or junior staff to be the eyes and ears of the exercise staff. These people should be checking on food and coffee supplies, noticing when somebody looks unduly irritated, passing out event sheets, collecting forms, etc.

Keep track of observers. People who run the facilities you use should know who has been invited to be where and when. Other agencies may want to know as well. Assign sufficient staff to make sure that the observers can get the information and supplies they need without wandering.

Control the room during briefings. If there is chatter in the background, politely ask people to take it outside "for the benefit of those in the room who haven't had to listen to this a thousand times already." The safety briefing can also be an excuse to get people to be quiet, again "for the new folks." In the EOC or other closed rooms, an opening statement should be made that asks people to be patient if they have to be shushed for the benefit of others "who have a hard time hearing in a crowded environment." People being disruptive should not be singled out unless it is absolutely unavoidable. In such cases, a controller should take the person aside privately.

Use handouts and other knowledge props. A double-sided bullet point list of artificialities, goals, and constraints will go a long way toward explaining things to observers and the press: What You Will See Today, What You Will Not See Today, Exercise Constraints, How to Ask Questions During the Drill, Where to Send Questions or Comments After the Drill.

Even Controllers can get caught up in exercise play. Assign and empower **facilitators who can take controllers aside and move them in the directions they need to go for administrative purposes.** These people can have other duties, such as being controllers, so long as they are familiar enough with the exercise design to recognize trouble. Make sure everyone knows the power these individuals have during the exercise.

Examples of when a gentle shove may be necessary include making sure people understand artificialities or how to turn in their evaluation forms, making sure observers (especially the press) have enough narration to keep from making bad assumptions, etc.

Narrate more than you think you need to and use status boards if available. Observers have a lot of "down time" during exercises. Tell them again and again what is happening. Ask people for their questions and comments.

Include problem-solving in the narration. When a gap is encountered or a problem pops up, explain to observers how it is being worked around. It is important for them to realize that front-line people have to be creative to make things work, that nothing ever really goes by the book.

Narrate more than you think you need to.

It is important for observers to realize that front-line people have to be creative to make things work, that nothing ever really goes by the book.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

- Exercise Support Plan (including sections given above, plus others as needed)
- Financial estimates and records
- Field Management and Comfort Facility maps
- Contact information and tasking of facilitators
- Safety Plan with authorities for safety officers and Safety Information for briefings
- Site Access Management and Security Plan with authorities for facilitators, controllers, and any security personnel
- Contact information and tasking of volunteers
- Volunteer Management Plan incorporating volunteer plans from other committees
- Observer contact information and location(s)
- Observer Management Plan including facilitator authorities and any special arrangements for certain observers (such as VIPs)
- List of people to receive list of observers (as above)
- Copies of agreements with suppliers
- Schedule of any facilitator training or orientation sessions
- Schedule of any volunteer training or orientation sessions

11. Exercise Information Packets

Each type of person attending/participating in your exercise should receive a packet of information. The lists below are suggestions for various categories of attendees. Your packets may vary depending on how you create your informational documents, the size and goals of the exercise, and budget constraints.

For most types of packets, an inexpensive two-pocket report folder should be sufficient. If a person needs supporting documents or a clipboard, you may need to use an expandable folder or 3-ring binder. Whatever you use, make sure the exercise name and packet type are on the front so that distribution is easy.

For VIP observers and evaluators, you may want to tailor both the documents and the packets to suit their needs or to make the best use of what they can contribute to the exercise.

The documents listed in the sidebar may be combined in different ways. For example, you may find that there is enough information on your Observer Guidelines sheet that it is unnecessary to provide them with a separate Exercise Information and Safety Sheet.

You may want to send out some pieces of the packet in advance by e-mail (maps and schedule, evaluation materials, control plan, etc.). However, you should still provide hard copies in the packets.

Unless your budget is extremely tight, you should provide a pen/pencil and a few sheets of note paper in each packet. Other items that may be useful in some types of package are shown at the left:

- **list of observers**
- **press policy for exercise participants**
- **press kit**
- **radio use instructions**
- **supporting documents (plans, etc.)**
- **inject slips or cards for controllers**
- **master objective list**
- **master list of participating orginizations**
- **parking permits**
- **ID badges**
- **small notebook**
- **clipboard**
- **disposable/returnable camera**
- **markers**
- **index cards**

Possible Packet Contents

Note: Participants are listed as receiving information about and for the observers to help them identify people who should and should not be in the field of play and so that they know how to direct people who are lost or need help.

Observers (including the press)

Welcome Letter (Observer)

Safety Guidelines

General Exercise Information (with limited scenario and schedule)

Observer Guidelines

Problem/Best Practice Forms

Maps

Controllers and Simulators

Welcome Letter (Controller) (Simulator)

Control and Facilitation Plan

Safety Guidelines

General Exercise Information (with limited scenario and schedule)

List of Observers

Observer Guidelines

Full Scenario with Injects

Full Schedule with actual and simulated times

Problem/Best Practice Forms

Self and Exercise Evaluation Packet

Maps

Facilitators and Narrators

Welcome Letter (Facilitator)

Safety Guidelines

General Exercise Information (with limited scenario and schedule)

List of Observers

Observer Guidelines

Full Scenario with Injects

Full Schedule with actual and simulated times

Problem/Best Practice Forms

Self and Exercise Evaluation Packet

Maps

List of Expected Press and Press Guidelines

Narration Guidelines (if Development Team feels it necessary)

Facilitation Team list and task list

Evaluators

Welcome Letter (Evaluator)

Evaluation Plan (unless it is included in the evaluation packet)

Safety Guidelines

General Exercise Information (with limited scenario and schedule)

List of Observers

Observer Guidelines

Full Scenario with Injects

Full Schedule with actual and simulated times

Full Evaluation Packet

Problem/Best Practice Forms

Maps

Participants

Welcome Letter (Participant)

Safety Guidelines

General Exercise Information (with limited scenario and schedule)

Self and Exercise Evaluation Packet

Problem/Best Practice Forms

Maps

Volunteers (other than evaluators, controllers, and facilitators)

Welcome Letter (Volunteer)

Safety Guidelines

General Exercise Information (with limited scenario and schedule)

Full Scenario with Injects

Full Schedule with actual and simulated times

Problem/Best Practice Forms

Self and Exercise Evaluation Packet

Maps

List of Expected Press and Press Guidelines

Volunteer maps and guidelines

Volunteer contact list and task list

Possible supporting documents include

- **plans being tested**
- **press coverage of issues related to what is being exercised**
- **regulations/ grant language applying to the exercise, etc.**
- **reports or articles relating to procedures or systems being tested**

USE OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Supporting documents in an exercise information packet should have one of two purposes. Either it is something the recipient is expected to use during the exercise/exercise evaluation or it is something you hope he/she will read after the exercise. If the latter, be clear about it in the welcome letter so that the recipient knows not to throw it away.

Possible supporting documents include

- plans being tested
- press coverage of issues related to what is being exercised
- regulations/grant language applying to the exercise, etc.
- reports or articles relating to procedures or systems being tested

Do not fall into the trap of providing too much information. It would be better to include a list of available documents and have people request (or pick up at a table at the exercise) any they want than to weigh everyone down with an overwhelming amount of paper.

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

You should collect information for the packets that will be given out to different types of attendees and, finally, copies of the packet contents. At the end of the planning process, you should save two of each type of packet, one set to be copied for the After Action Report, and one set to be saved in your Master Planning Binder (which may be a box by this time) for future exercises.

When you are ready to assemble the packets, use a check-list or other system to keep track of what parts of the packets are finalized, which have been copied, and which are already assembled. Remember to make a few extra for last-minute arrivals, lost packets, and your own files.

Observer Packets

Document	Finalized?	Copied?	Assembled?	Notes
Welcome Letter (Observer	✔			Example:print on letterhead
Safety Guidelines	✔	✔	✔	
General Exercise schedule Information (with limited scenario and schedule				Example: waiting for final
Observer Guidelines	✔	✔	✔	
Problem/Best Practice Form (1-2)	✔	✔	✔	
Maps	✔	✔		

12. Assessment and Integration of Results

Creating a timeline for assessment and integration is critical. It is very easy for other items to take priority once the day of the exercise has passed.

The After Action Report is the summary of all the effort that went into the exercise, from design to the actual event. However, it is only one aspect of the overall assessment and integration of results. Creating a timeline for assessment and integration is critical. It is very easy for other items to take priority once the day of the exercise has passed. Other items include:

Hotwash Plans—will a hotwash be held directly after the exercise? If so, will each agency do it individually or will it be all participants? Who will contribute? Who will speak? What will be emphasized?

After Action Meeting(s) Plans—how will the After Action Report get written and how will the lessons learned get incorporated into existing plans and procedures? Who will do the work and when will they meet?

After Action Report(s) Plans—What components will go into the report (see below)? What are the different types of reports to be produced? How soon do they need to be done? How will they be distributed?

Expectations regarding integration of results into plans and procedures—what are reasonable plans that can be made to make use of what was learned in the exercise? What are possible obstacles and some ideas for overcoming them? Who will do the work? What plans and procedures are involved?

Plan for capturing exercise design process and lessons learned—how will things learned about planning an exercise be captured, put in usable form, and made available to people running the next exercise? Who is responsible for making it happen? Will any part of that process be shared outside of the agencies participating in the exercise? If no, why not?

Capturing the planning process is something to think about while you are planning the current exercise. Create templates that can be used in future exercises.

Have training officers and other staff develop (1) boiler-plate evaluation materials from available templates and the agencies plans, (2) a few open-ended evaluation questions for various areas of operation, and (3) lists of operational and command objectives by area. These should be stored on CDs for easy access and quick editing for future exercises.

Command-level staff should think about and write out communications templates for their staff about the goals/objectives issues described in previous chapters. They should also work out rough outlines of what kinds of work groups will be needed in exercises and what their baseline responsibilities will be.

Public Information Officers should write boiler-plate (1) for the press, (2) for community outreach before, during, and after the exercise, and (3) to help on-scene narrators effectively communicate the less obvious aspects of exercises (constraints, how much learning happens while planning, artificialities. etc.)

Keep track of reactions from participants, observers and the public. They provide clues about what kind of information these groups might need before, during, and after an event.

Integration of Results is the Most Difficult Part of an Exercise

For both political and practical reasons, it can be very difficult to take the lessons learned in an exercise and incorporate them into existing plans and procedures. The most elaborate After Action Report is only a doorstop if its recommendations are never implemented. This reality is not likely to change so the best thing exercise planners can do is to plan what they will actually try to do and have follow up meetings to assess progress and document obstacles.

These plans may be very simple. Three examples:

> **"Anystate Department of Health will pass recommended changes to the committee in charge of revising the Emergency Operations Plan, which is due to be released in draft form at the beginning of the next fiscal year. As part of the on-going Exercise Program Development, Bob Smith will review the new**

For both political and practical reasons, it can be very difficult to take the lessons learned in an exercise and incorporate them into existing plans and procedures.

The most elaborate After Action Report is only a doorstop if its recommendations are never implemented.

EOPs drafts and place a note on integration of exercise results in the Exercise Program file."

"Anystate Health Department will incorporate recommended changes to its notification procedures immediately. Sarah Jones has the authority to make the changes and will place a note in the Exercise Program file when it has been done."

"Anystate Health Department will recommend changes in the Anystate volunteer use laws. Dan Miller has agreed to bring these recommendations to the Health Commissioner and will follow up on recommendation progress, making notes in the Exercise Program file as necessary."

In each case, a particular person has taken responsibility for implementing or trying to implement change and for reporting on progress. The progress notes enable future exercise planners to assess the status of previously recommended changes and to decide whether or not the change implementation strategies they used were or were not effective.

AFTER ACTION REPORT

As discussed at the beginning of this guidance, the format and content of an After Action Report will depend on the type of exercise and the intended audience of the report. However, by including some contextual information and following a few organizational standards, you can make the report more useful. Minimally, it should contain the following information, much of which can be taken directly from your planning documents without further work.

Note: Images can be used throughout the report for illustration, but those that do not tie directly to some part of the report should be placed in an annex. Random pictures just cause confusion for readers.

Cover Sheet

The sheet should include contact information for Oversight Committee.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

All sponsors and other VIPs should be included.

List of Participating Organizations

List of Observing Organizations

List of Committees and Membership

List of Evaluators, Controllers, and Facilitators

1 page (or less) Overview of the Exercise

The overview should be written for somebody who has never heard of it before and include information on whether it was for testing or learning

Exercise Objectives

Full Scenario

This version should include all the injects and artificialities.

Evaluation Strategy Brief

Although short, this section should include the tasking of evaluators.

Action Assessment/Evaluation and Recommendations

The contents of this section will vary, but should start with a narrative overview of the evaluation method and findings. Often people choose to organize the report around each stated objective: objective, description of problems and best practices encountered, and a recommendation. In many cases, it might make more sense to organize the report around the things you are recommending, using observations for support. Some people also choose to follow the exercise from beginning to end, reporting on each activity as it occurred.

The important thing is to include specific recommendations and show how the exercise findings support those recommendations. Be as concrete as you can in the recommendations, suggesting which agencies should do what, how they might fund it or include it in other programs, and what a reasonable time frame would be for changes to be made.

Recommendations for Future Exercises

In narrative or bullet point form, describe any lessons you learned about planning or administering an exercise that can be used by future Exercise Oversight Committees.

Conclusion (optional)

Appendices

Evaluation Strategy and Instruments
Controller Plan
Safety Plan
Press Releases
Press Coverage of Exercise
Images

Information to Capture, Planning Documents to Create

Many of the sections of the After Action Report can be cut and pasted directly from documents you create for other aspects of the exercise. With just a little re-formatting, the busy-work of the document is already taken care of and you can focus on the meat. A few things to track:

- **recommendations for future exercises—just jot things down in some central place**
- **press folder—for clippings**
- **image folder and file—for paper and digital pictures respectively**

SAMPLE OF TABLE OF CONTENTS for an After Action Report

Cover Sheet

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

List of Participating Organizations

List of Observing Organizations

List of Committees and Membership

List of Evaluators, Controllers, and Facilitators

1 page (or less) overview of the exercise

Exercise Objectives

Full Scenario

Evaluation Strategy Brief

Action