

Exercises and Drills

In crisis management, as in sports or music, you play the way you practice. That is why it is essential that transit managers test emergency preparedness plans through disaster drills and exercises that are increasingly challenging over time. Implementation of such a program allows your staff to achieve and maintain competency in the skills necessary to effectively respond to the risks you face.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has established guidance doctrine known as the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP) by which to enhance your preparedness for disaster incidents. There are seven steps to the HSEEP training and exercise process:

Discussion-based activities:

1. **Seminars** utilizing lecture, multi-media presentations, case studies, and expert testimony to orient participants to response resources, strategies, policies, and procedures. Seminars are recommended for organizations and jurisdictions that are developing or making major changes to their emergency response plans.
2. **Workshops** to develop specific incident response products, typically using break-out sessions followed by plenary review and discussion. Workshops are frequently used to establish exercise objectives, develop exercise scenarios, and identify elements of standard performance.
3. **Tabletop Exercises** involving key personnel in discussions about realistic disaster scenarios. Tabletop exercises are used to assess and enhance preparedness, prevention, response and recovery plans, policies and procedures. Basic tabletop exercises introduce a complete disaster scenario for participants to discuss and resolve. Advanced tabletop exercises introduce scenario components incrementally forcing participants to adapt their response strategies to changing disaster conditions.
4. **Games** provide scenario analysis and discussion in a competitive, time-restricted environment, holding participants to the consequences of previous decisions. Games are used primarily to evaluate decision-making processes, and do not involve actual deployment of operational resources.

Operational-based activities:

5. **Drills** that develop and maintain procedural skills (e.g. building evacuation, nuclear attack drills, etc.). Drills are designed to measure performance of operational activities against established response standards with immediate player feedback.
6. **Functional Exercises** are test deployment and delivery capacities of a particular emergency response function – mass evacuation, for example – using realistic disaster scenarios and time constraints.
7. **Full-Scale Exercises** are interdisciplinary events that test the ability of multiple response functions to deploy simultaneously, and articulate activities with other functional areas. Although pre-scripted events may be used to trigger the exercise, full-scale exercises are primarily driven by player actions and decisions

