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Department of Defence

# Strategic Emergency Management

Guideline 6 - Planning and Exercising

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## SECTION A - PLANNING

This document is produced to guide government departments and agencies, to plan for and exercise strategic emergency response arrangements.

### Introduction

1. The most effective way for government departments and agencies to prepare to respond to national emergencies is to develop and prepare emergency management plans.
2. An emergency management plan once developed should be capable of being scaled up or down depending on the scale, complexity and diversity of the emergency.<sup>1</sup>
3. The department or agency emergency management plan is effectively the rule book for how the response and recovery will be conducted.<sup>2</sup>
4. The main purpose of emergency management planning is to document and adopt policies, plans and procedures, develop emergency arrangements, identify individual roles and responsibilities and agree boundaries of authority.<sup>3</sup>
5. Planning must take into account the needs of the department/agency, their objectives, operational context, structures, processes, functions, assets and practices.<sup>4</sup>

### Background

6. The Planning and Preparedness stage in emergency management describes a range of activities from preparing emergency plans and

standard operating guidance to putting facilities in place or acquiring equipment, training staff and holding exercises.

7. Each Lead Government Department (LGD) should have a generic emergency plan which sets out the arrangements it will invoke in response to certain trigger conditions.
8. In addition to the generic emergency plan, each LGD should also draw up 'Scenario Specific' Plans, related to each of the emergency types for which it is responsible. These should specify how coordination is achieved through each stage of the Five-Stage Emergency Management Paradigm, See Figure 1.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1 - Emergency Management Paradigm**



### Planning Requirements

9. All departments and agencies must establish an emergency management group which will plan for, respond to and recover from crises and emergencies under an appropriate governance structure.
10. A department/agency may use a different naming convention to describe the emergency management

<sup>1</sup> Coppola, D.P. 2006. *Introduction to international disaster management*. Butterworth-Heinemann.

<sup>2</sup> Haddow, G.D., Bullock, J.A. and Coppola, D.P. 09 Jul 2010. *Introduction to emergency management*. 4th ed. Butterworth Heinemann.

<sup>3</sup> Coppola, D. P. (2006)

<sup>4</sup> ISO (2010): *National guidance on implementing I.S. ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management -Principles and guidelines*. International Standard ISO 31000: 2010. Geneva: International Organisation for Standardisation

<sup>5</sup> Office of Emergency Planning (2017). *Strategic Emergency Management National Structures and Framework*. Defence Forces Printing Press. P22

group, howsoever named, this group must as a minimum:

- Be established by a decision of the department's Management Board
- Be chaired by a senior official with decision-making authority
- Document how (VC or in-person) and where the Group will meet to manage the emergency, this may require office space and appropriate ICT arrangements
- Allocate specific roles and responsibilities to department/agency business areas
- Coordinate across department/agency business areas
- Develop a department/agency Generic Emergency Plan and Scenario Specific Plans
- Ensure that all staff identified in the plan receive appropriate regular training
- Ensure records of training and exercises are maintained
- Provide support to the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning (GTF) and working groups
- Identify the appropriate official to Chair the National Emergency Coordination Group in the event of an emergency occurring for which the department has been allocated LGD responsibility by virtue of Annex 'A' SEM (LGD Only)
- Support the National Emergency Coordination Group in the event that your department/agency has been allocated a support role in an emergency requiring national level coordination by another LGD.

## Supporting Departments and Agencies

11. Many government departments and agencies have key roles to play in supporting the emergency management function of LGDs.
12. SEM Annex 'A' identifies a list of departments and agencies which may support LGDs in their planning for, response to and recovery from an emergency.
13. Any supporting departments/agencies identified in the scenario specific plans of the LGD must prepare an Emergency Management Support Role Plan which should be informed by the LGD scenario specific plan.
14. LGD should liaise closely with supporting departments and agencies to ensure that support plans are complimentary to the LGD scenario specific plan

## Planning Essentials

15. Planning is based on an All-Hazards approach, meaning that regardless of the nature of the emergency, there are certain tasks and activities which must take place.
16. These generic functions should form part of any planning process:

- Horizon Scanning
- General activation and operation of the emergency management office
- Activation of the National Emergency Coordination Group, when required
- Information Management
- Coordinated decision making
- Response support roles

17. Plans must be comprehensive, realistic and robust. Plans should be treated with an appropriate degree of confidentiality, particularly if they impact in any way on national security.

18. Plans should set out a clear unambiguous statement of purpose, providing a high-level overview of the department's/agency's approach to emergency planning.

19. The statement of purpose should be aimed at senior officials, officials with assigned responsibilities in emergency plans, supporting agencies and other important stakeholders.<sup>6</sup>

20. Plans must be tested to ensure that they are fit for purpose - testing of plans can be through table top exercises, internal and external reviews and simulated live exercises - See SECTION TWO.

21. Plans must be reviewed and revised at least annually but also when emerging risks are identified or following the after action review of a live emergency or on completion of an improvement plan following an exercise.

22. Plans should be controlled through the use of version numbers and circulation lists. This ensures that only the latest version of the document is available to users with updated versions circulated once approved for publication.

### Generic Emergency Plans

23. Generic emergency plans are the core plans which enable departments/agencies to respond to a wide range of possible emergencies.

24. Each department/agency's generic emergency plan should be coordinated with the emergency management support role plan of supporting departments/agencies and vice versa and should contain references to them.

25. The generic emergency plan must be approved by management board/senior management as the basis for a departmental/agency response to emergency.

26. The generic emergency plan must take account of the *National Risk Assessment for Ireland* and department/agency specific risk assessments.

27. A generic emergency plan must contain the following as a minimum:<sup>7</sup>

- Aim and objectives of the plan
- Links with plans of other departments/agencies
- Trigger for activation of the plan, including alert and standby procedures
- Activation procedures
- Contact details for key personnel
- Identification of points of contact in each supporting department and agency
- Identification, roles & responsibilities of the emergency management group
- Identification and generic roles of emergency support staff
- Reporting structures
- Decision making mandates
- Identification of official to act as Head of Emergency Operations
- Location(s) of emergency management office accommodation from where the

<sup>6</sup> FEMA, 2010. *Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans, Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101 2010*. Pp 3-12 - 3-13. [Online] Available at: [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/CPG\\_101\\_V2\\_30NOV2010\\_FINAL\\_508.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/CPG_101_V2_30NOV2010_FINAL_508.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> British cabinet Office (2011). *Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme*. Chapter 5 (Emergency Planning) Revision to Emergency Preparedness

emergency will be managed (National Emergency Coordination Centre if escalated to National Emergency Coordination Group)

- Generic roles of all parts of the organisation in relation to responding to emergencies
- Trigger or Threshold for convening a National Emergency Coordination Group (LGD only)
- National Emergency Coordination Group Trigger authority (LGD only)
- Access arrangement for the National Emergency Coordination Centre from where the response will be coordinated
- Minute takers
- Information Management Systems
- Information briefing for Minister
- Media Plan (Communications Subgroup)
- Mechanism to access budgetary supports
- Stand-down procedures
- Trigger for identification of Recovery Phase
- Identification of LGD for Recovery if different (LGD only)
- Reference to National Risk Assessment and SEM documents
- Plan maintenance procedures (reviewed annually)
- Plan exercises schedule
- Any LGD specific requirements

See Appendix 1

28. On completion of the Generic Emergency Plan the Emergency Management Group must:

- Disseminate generic emergency plan throughout the organisation;
- Provide for the training, development and exercising of relevant staff;
- Provide a mechanism for embedding business continuity and emergency planning within the culture of the organisations.

### Scenario Specific Plans

29. A plan which relates to a particular emergency type as outlined in Annex 'A' SEM, or a specific emergency in which a department has a response role, is known as a scenario specific plan.

30. Scenario specific plans are a detailed set of arrangements designed to go beyond the generic arrangements when the latter are likely to prove insufficient in a particular case.

31. A scenario specific plan usually relies on a generic plan. Departments should use information from hazard specific risk assessments and mitigation measures to decide whether a scenario specific plan is necessary or desirable.

32. A scenario specific plan should build on the requirements of the Generic Emergency Plan and should contain additional information such as:<sup>8</sup>

- Aim and objectives of the plan
- Links to the plans of other Departments/Agencies

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

- Information about the specific scenario for which the plan has been prepared
- Detailed hazard analysis and risk assessment
- Details with respect to mitigation measures in place
- Trigger for activation of the plan, including alert and standby procedures
- Activation procedures
- Agreed roles for supporting departments or agencies
- Identification of points of contact in each supporting department and agency
- Trigger or Threshold for convening a National Emergency Coordination Group (LGD Only)
- Access arrangement for the NECC from where the response will be coordinated
- Information Management Systems
- Media Plan (Communications Subgroup)
- Mechanism to access budgetary supports
- Plan maintenance procedures (reviewed annually).
- Plan exercises schedule
- Training schedule

See Appendix 2

### Other considerations

33. Sufficient personnel should be trained to deal with a prolonged period of emergency related activity. Suitable 'alternates' should also be trained, in case the selected individuals are not available when an emergency occurs.

34. Contact lists of key officials should be maintained separately from the actual emergency plans, for data protection purposes and to enable publication of the plans (if appropriate). Contact details should be updated on an ongoing basis, to take account of staff changes.

35. Officials who have been assigned to perform emergency management functions (such as Chair of National Emergency Coordination Group) must be trained and exercised in their emergency management roles which may include the use of communications and other technical facilities used in the National Emergency Coordination Centre.

36. The National Emergency Coordination Centre is available to Lead Government Departments for the exercising and testing of Emergency Response plans.

37. The Office of Emergency Planning can offer advice and assistance to Lead Government Departments during the preparation and testing of emergency response plans.

## SECTION B - Exercises

### Introduction

38. Exercises represent opportunities to test the procedures and arrangements specified in a plan.

39. Developing an exercise requires the creation of scenarios designed to simulate an event or incident that approximates the threat addressed in Annex A of the SEM.

40. This Guideline is designed to assist departments and agencies to develop competence in planning strategic emergency exercises as outlined in the Section 5.11 of the *Strategic Emergency Management National Structures and Framework* document.

41. To ensure continued improvement in departmental and agency strategic emergency preparedness and response, it is recommended that response plans or a portion thereof be exercised annually. Each LGD should exercise at least one scenario once a year.

42. Consideration should be given to developing a multi-annual exercise schedule which sets out the elements of the emergency plan to be exercised each year so that all arrangements are exercised over the lifetime of the schedule.

### Background

43. One of the objectives of this Guideline Document is to support the safe conduct of emergency response operations through efficient planning and realistic training and exercises.

44. A key function for LGD is to develop and conduct appropriate exercises, evaluate the lessons learned

from such exercises and implement the actions to address these lessons learned into the next iteration of the emergency plan.

45. Officials who have been assigned emergency management functions (such as Chair and staff of the National Emergency Coordination Group) should be trained and exercised in their emergency management roles which may include the use of communications and other technical facilities used in the National Emergency Coordination Centre.

46. Plans must be tested to ensure that they are fit for purpose - testing of plans can be done through a number of methods such as table top exercises, internal and external reviews and simulated live exercises, at Government Department level.

47. Where live activation of a department's emergency response plan has not occurred for a period of time, exercises are a means of developing operational experience and testing a plan's appropriateness against the latest emerging threats.

48. Development of emergency management capacity involves a series of sequenced steps, tailored to an individual department's requirements. Typically, this involves the conducting of a series of exercises of a progressively complex nature over a period of time, which are staged to provide an opportunity to determine the practicality of emergency arrangements.<sup>9</sup>

### Purpose

49. This Guideline document provides a set of fundamental principles for exercise programmes, as well as a common approach to exercise management,

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<sup>9</sup> Office of Emergency Planning (2017). *Strategic Emergency Management National Structures and Framework*. Defence Forces Printing Press.



design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning.

50. Exercises are an important component of preparedness, by providing government departments and agencies with the opportunity to improve planning, assess and validate capabilities, and address areas for improvement.

### Role of Exercises

51. Exercises play an important role in preparedness. A well-designed exercise provides a safe environment to familiarise personnel with their emergency roles and responsibilities; foster meaningful interaction and communication within and across departments and agencies; assess and validate generic and scenario specific plans, policies, procedures, and capabilities; and identify strengths and weaknesses.

52. An exercise can be as simple as a department or agency meeting to discuss the practicalities of the emergency plan or as complex as a major multi-agency event involving several organisations and participants.

53. Exercises provide a means to:<sup>10</sup>

- Evaluate plans and procedures
- Identify and explore issues
- Develop awareness of emergency arrangements
- Assess competence
- Demonstrate the department/agency capability
- Practise interoperability
- Validate training
- Identify gaps
- Evaluate procedures

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<sup>10</sup> Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (2012). *Handbook 3 Managing Exercises*

### Training

54. Training provides the Lead Government Departments, supporting departments and agencies with the knowledge of the SEM structures and support mechanisms. Departments should determine their training needs based on information derived from internal assessments, strategies, and plans developed during the emergency planning and preparedness phase.

# PART ONE

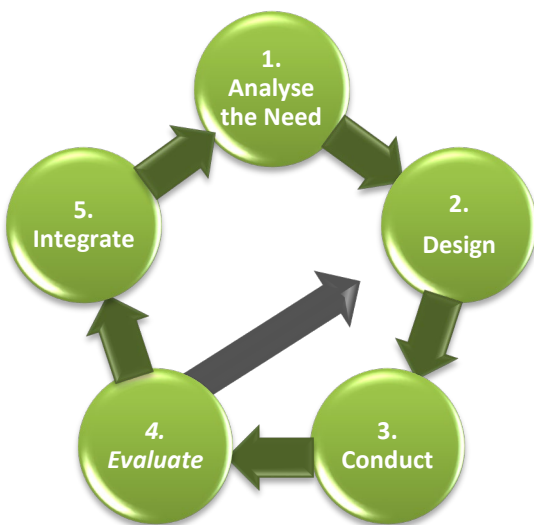
## ANALYSING THE NEED

### Exercise Development Cycle

55. The exercise life cycle or development cycle applies to all levels of exercise regardless of a department’s or agency’s size, role or budget. The process provides flexibility to meet the unique needs of the organisation. Each stage should be designed, tailored and applied in a manner that suits the objectives and capabilities of the department or agency carrying out the exercise. Effective evaluation is critical to success and evaluation should be considered throughout all phases of the exercise cycle.<sup>11</sup>

56. For evaluation to be of value, lessons identified should be integrated into future iterations of generic or scenario specific emergency plans.

**Figure 2 - Exercise Development Cycle**



<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). *Director’s Guideline for Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups*. Wellington, New Zealand. p 8.

### Exercise Sponsorship

57. The input of senior leaders should be sought in the early stage of exercise design to ensure that there is appropriate corporate oversight and strategic direction for exercise development. A senior manager should be assigned the role of exercise sponsor.

### Analysing the Need

58. All exercises emerge from an identified need to test a plan. This can also be as a result of legislative requirements, new or unforeseen emerging threats, validation of training, new staff appointments, new technology, etc. A needs assessment should be conducted to identify areas where exercise activity is required. A needs assessment should be conducted in order to:

- Understand a department’s or agency’s requirement for an exercise
- Identify issues in emergency response arrangements
- Establish the reasons to do an exercise
- Identify the functions to be exercised

59. By conducting a needs assessment, the aim and objectives for the exercise will be identified. This will inform the exercise design.<sup>12</sup>

60. Needs assessment should be conducted annually.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). *Director’s Guideline for Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups*. Wellington, New Zealand. Pp 11.

## Exercise Aim

61. There should be only one aim for an exercise. A clear aim leads to a series of objectives that will inform the exercise design.

62. The exercise aim is a single statement of intent that gives direction to what is desired to be achieved by the exercise.

## Exercise Objectives

63. Exercise objectives are specific statements describing what is to be achieved by carrying out the exercise

64. Exercise objectives:<sup>13</sup>

- Must be agreed at the start of the exercise development cycle
- Must be clear and concise
- Should be simple and written in commonly understood language

65. An objective should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and task-bound (SMART).

66. Exercise objectives should incorporate some or all of the following:<sup>14</sup>

- Senior Leader requirements
- Existing plans, policies, and procedures
- Operating environment
- Corrective actions from previous exercises
- Experience from real-world incidents
- Desired outcomes

## Types of Exercises

### Discussion-Based Exercises

67. Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops and table-top exercises. These types of exercises familiarise participants with emergency arrangements, or support the development of new plans, policies, procedures, and coordination mechanisms. Discussion-based exercises focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues, and facilitators or presenters lead the discussion, keeping participants moving towards meeting the exercise objectives.<sup>15</sup>

### Operations-Based Exercises

68. Operations-based exercises include drills, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises. These exercises validate plans, policies, procedures, and coordination; clarify roles and responsibilities; and identify resource gaps.<sup>16</sup>

### Workshops

69. Workshops can be pitched at different levels depending on needs. They can be used to familiarise new personnel with the procedures of the organisation or they can be designed to engage senior managers in a problem identification exercise.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (2012). P. 4

<sup>14</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security (2020). P. 3-11

<sup>15</sup> Ibid Pp.2-9

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (2016). *Guidance Document 4 A Guide To Planning And Staging Exercises*. Pp. 7

## Seminars

70. Seminars are informal discussions, unconstrained by real-time portrayal of events and led by a presenter. Seminars usually involve examining emergency plans/procedures through the use of a case study and then discussing their key features.

Seminars may be useful to:<sup>18</sup>

- Induct new personnel
- Train personnel
- Highlight key elements of a plan
- Examine a plan

### 71. Table top Exercises

Participants are presented with a situation or problem that they are required to discuss and formulate the appropriate response or solution to. Normally, the exercise requires no simulation other than a scenario and/or prewritten exercise injects. This type of exercise is used to practise problem solving and coordination with external partners with or without time pressures. There is no deployment or actual use of equipment or resources.

## Standards and Performance Measures

72. It is essential that a range of criteria are developed to enable evaluation of the exercise and reporting on outcomes.

73. These measures should be used by the:<sup>19</sup>

- Exercise planning group to design the exercise inputs
- Exercise facilitators to guide participants

- Exercise evaluators to measure performance during the exercise.

## Exercise Concept Document

74. An exercise concept document can be used as a briefing document for participants because it describes the intent of the exercise and how it will be managed. It provides the focus and direction for the exercise, identifies who will participate and why the exercise is being held.

75. Formal sign off is required from the exercise senior sponsor, the emergency management group and participating departments or agencies.<sup>20</sup>

## Budget and Resources

76. It is important to maintain awareness of available resources and expected expenditures. In developing and maintaining an exercise programme budget, the exercise planning group should work with stakeholders to identify resources and define monitoring and reporting requirements for individual exercises.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (2012). P. 9

<sup>19</sup> Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (2012). P. 5

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). P 17

<sup>21</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security (2020). P. 2-12

## PART TWO

### EXERCISE DESIGN

#### Scope

77. Determining the exercise scope enables planners to “right-size” an exercise to meet the objectives while staying within the resource and personnel constraints of the participating Departments and/or Agencies <sup>22</sup>

78. There are 4 factors to consider under Exercise Scope;

- Exercise Type
- Participation Level
- Location
- Duration

#### Exercise Planning Group

79. The exercise planning group is responsible for the successful execution of all aspects of the exercise, including exercise planning, conduct and evaluation.

80. The exercise planning group should continue to engage the senior sponsor throughout the exercise development cycle to ensure strategic oversight is maintained.

81. The exercise planning group must have representatives from each major participating department/agency but should be kept to a manageable size. Membership of the group should be modified to suit the type and scope of the exercise.

82. Generally, planning group members are not exercise players; however, due to the planning group’s high-level involvement, members are ideal for roles

such as Exercise Director and/or evaluator positions during the exercise.<sup>23</sup>

83. The exercise planning group should select a reasonable number of objectives to facilitate effective scenario design, exercise conduct, and evaluation.

#### Exercise Planning Meetings

84. Exercise Planning Groups should meet to consider the following elements:

- Develop concepts and objectives
- Develop scope and scenario
- Mid-term review meeting to agree scenario, timeline and develop injects
- Final planning meeting to approve documentation and resolve any last minute issues
- Post-exercise meeting to finalise Exercise evaluation and report

#### Choosing an Exercise Type

85. The aim and objectives of the exercise will help you determine the most appropriate type required. The exercise planning group does not have to restrict itself to only one type. Building progressive exercise programmes or using several different exercise types is often useful.

86. The type of exercise chosen will be influenced by many factors including:

- Aim and Objectives
- Level of experience
- Training needs
- Commitment of key staff

<sup>22</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security (2020). P. 3-10

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). P 21

- Availability of participants
- Time
- Resource availability
- Budget
- Risk assessment

### Key Performance Indicators

87. A KPI may further define an objective, and is helpful when formulating the evaluation tool or measures.

### Scenario Development

88. The scenario should be designed to ensure that the exercise objectives are met.

89. Scenario development must follow the strategic direction for the exercise set out by senior management.

90. The scenario is a narrative that describes an event that has occurred/is occurring, that the exercise to which participants will need respond to. It provides a brief description of events.

91. Scenario development should be cognisant of the reasonable worst case scenarios developed during the national risk assessment process.

92. Scenario developed should also be cognisant of the identified emergencies in Annex 'A' of SEM.

93. The scenario has two important functions.<sup>24</sup>

- It sets the tone for the exercise
- It also sets the stage for later action by providing information that the participants will need during the exercise

### Exercise Roles & Responsibilities

94. The exercise planning group (Control Staff) are responsible for ensuring all exercise aims and objectives are achievable during exercise play.

95. Exercise control staff roles may include:

- Exercise Director
- Evaluator(s)
- Department/agency representatives
- Exercise facilitator

### Exercise Timing

96. A decision that has to be made at an early stage is whether the exercise is to run in real time or whether the scenario will unfold in a series of vignettes corresponding to stages along a timeline. A further consideration is whether the exercise will be paused at any point to allow for review.<sup>25</sup>

### Master Schedule of Events

97. The master schedule of events is a detailed sequence of events used by exercise control staff to ensure that the exercise runs smoothly. It is also known as a running sheet, programme, script or main event list.

98. A master schedule of events is prepared by the exercise planning group. Contributions will be required from all participating department and agency representatives. The complexity of the master schedule of events will depend on the size and scale of the exercise.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). P 34

<sup>25</sup> National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (2016). P. 22

99. The master schedule of events is used to:<sup>26</sup>

- Detail the sequence of events, particularly on the day of the exercise
- Indicate the timing of each event
- Identify who is responsible for tasks
- Provide exercise control staff with a 'script'
- Provide guidance for the pace and direction of the exercise

### Developing Messages and Injects

100. Messages and other injects are used to communicate detailed incidents or developments to exercise participants.

101. Messages and injects serve the purpose to generate a response (i.e. to cause exercise participants to make decisions and take actions that meet the exercise objectives).

102. The Exercise Planning Group should use a standard form when creating messages and injects. A standard form should include a space for a message number, the time that the message is to be delivered, and the information that will prompt the action to be taken.<sup>27</sup>

103. All exercise materials should be clearly marked to indicate that they refer to an exercise and not a real event e.g. putting "EXERCISE EXERCISE EXERCISE" in the headers and footers or as a watermark.

### Exercise Instructions

104. An Exercise Instruction is a document sent to all exercise participants well in advance of the exercise activity.

105. Exercise Instructions should highlight essential information including administrative arrangements.

106. Instruction should include:

- Exercise Aim
- Exercise Objectives
- Standards and Performance Measures
- Exercise Purpose and Type
- Date, time and location of the exercise
- The outline scenario
- Exercise Scope
- Participating departments and agencies
- Exercise Roles & Responsibilities including those of the exercise planning group
- Exercise Instructions
- Communications and Media Management Plan
- Exercise Evaluation Strategy

### Exercise Risk Management

107. If a risk assessment for the exercise is required then a risk management plan should be produced.<sup>28</sup>

### Exercise Logistics

108. Logistics for discussion-based exercises include facility and room, audio/visual requirements, breakout identification, parking, refreshments, and

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<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). Pp 48-49

<sup>27</sup> Ibid P44

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). P 38.

media, department/agency Communications staff (if required), and invited guests.<sup>29</sup>

### **Communications and Media Management Plan**

109. The exercise planning group should work to incorporate media-related issues into exercise planning.

110. Before an exercise, the exercise planning group may develop, if considered appropriate, a written press release to disseminate to media outlets, including web-based and social media outlets. The press release informs the media and the public about general exercise information.<sup>30</sup>

111. Dealing with the media is a significant aspect of any major emergency and, as such, every opportunity should be taken to practise the media plan. Exercises incorporating press conferences can be used to test media skills and information management.

### **Planning for Exercise Evaluation**

112. Planning and organisation prior to an exercise are imperative for effective and successful exercise evaluation. The exercise planning group should identify evaluation elements early in the exercise design process following the development of the exercise objectives.

113. An evaluation team determines the appropriate evaluation structure, and develops a comprehensive plan to address the evaluation of the exercise.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security (2020). P. 3-17

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. P 3-25

<sup>30</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security (2020). P. 3-16



## PART THREE

### CONDUCTING THE EXERCISE

#### Controlling the Exercise

114. The Exercise Control Staff are responsible for controlling the exercise according to the master schedule of events. This includes starting and stopping the exercise and introducing messages and injects into the exercise.

115. The Exercise Director can control the pace of the exercise by adjusting the inject flow, slowing things down when the pace is too frantic or speeding it up when the exercise drags.

#### Health and Safety

116. Participants should comply with all public health and safety requirements.

#### Pre-Exercise Activities

117. Members of the exercise planning group assigned to exercise setup should visit the exercise site to arrange the room, test the audio/visual equipment, and discuss administrative, and logistical issues.

118. Prior to the exercise conduct, the exercise planning group delivers materials, which may include the following:

- Any manuals, reference documents or other written materials for exercise participants
- Presentations
- Appropriate audio/visual equipment

- Name plates for each participant
- Sign-in sheets
- Participant Feedback Forms

119. A rehearsal of the exercise structure and presentations helps to ensure an understanding for those running the exercise.

#### Exercise Briefings

120. Before an exercise, briefings should be held to inform participants about their roles and responsibilities.

121. Separate briefings allow exercise planning group members to avoid giving extraneous material to different groups.<sup>32</sup>

#### Ending the Exercise

122. The exercise director may end the exercise in accordance with:<sup>33</sup>

- A designated time, according to the master schedule of events
- Achievement of all objectives
- Completion of designated tasks

#### Hot Debriefing

123. The hot debrief is a meeting that provides an opportunity for participants to discuss exercise strengths and areas for improvement immediately following an exercise.

124. An experienced facilitator leads the hot debrief and ensures the discussion remains constructive. The information gathered contributes to the After Action

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p 4-6

<sup>33</sup> Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (2012). P. 24

Review or Improvement Plan and any exercise suggestions can improve future exercises.

125. A hot debrief also provides an opportunity for participants to provide clarification and time to fill-out Participant Feedback Forms, which helps to generate the After Action Review or Improvement Plan.<sup>34</sup>

126. Consideration should be given to using online feedback forms as they make it easier to collate results.

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<sup>34</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security (2020). Pp. 4-7

## PART FOUR

### EXERCISE EVALUATION

127. Even the smallest of exercises should incorporate an exercise report. Conducting a thorough evaluation is not a minor undertaking, and may require dedicated staff and careful consideration.

128. All outcomes from an exercise should contribute to an organisation's learning and improvement.<sup>35</sup>

#### Evaluation Objective

129. Sound objectives are essential not only to a successful exercise, but also to its evaluation. An effective exercise planning group will already have produced specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and task-bound objectives.

#### Evaluation Process

130. There are four stages in the exercise evaluation process:<sup>36</sup>

- Plan and coordinate the evaluation
- Observe the exercise and collect data
- Analyse the data
- Develop the exercise report

#### Evaluation Documentation

131. The exercise planning group and Lead Evaluator should determine the tools, data collection methods, and documentation needed based on the level of complexity and scope of the Exercise.

132. Evaluation documentation can include;<sup>37</sup>

- Exercise planning group observations
- Evaluation forms from participants
- Hot-debrief notes
- Interviews with participants
- Post-exercise questionnaires

#### Evaluation Team

133. Once the exercise planning group defines evaluation requirements, the lead evaluator convenes evaluators.

#### Observation and Data Collection

134. Exercise observation and data collection can differ between discussion-based exercises and operations-based exercises.

135. Discussion-based exercises often focus on issues involving plans, policies, and procedures. Evaluators/Note Takers collect observations from participants' discussions.

136. Operations-based exercises focus on issues affecting the operational conduct of capabilities and critical tasks and implementation of plans, policies, and procedures. Evaluators/Note Takers collect and record participant actions, which form the analytical basis for determining the successful demonstration of critical tasks and capability targets.<sup>38</sup>

#### Data Analysis

137. During data analysis, the evaluation team consolidates the data collected during the exercise

<sup>35</sup> Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (2012). P. 26

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). P. 62

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. P. 5-6

and identifies demonstrated strengths and areas for improvement.

138. It is suggested that evaluators could use an appropriate methodology such as root cause analysis to identify weak or problematic areas of the exercise.<sup>39</sup>

### **After-Action Meeting**

139. The purpose of the After Action Meeting is to serve as a forum to review the draft After Action Review and Improvement Plan. Participants should seek to reach final consensus on strengths, areas for improvement, draft corrective actions, concrete deadlines, and owners/assignees for implementation of corrective actions.<sup>40</sup>

### **After Action Review & Reporting to GTF**

140. The final exercise report must include:<sup>41</sup>

- Introduction
- Executive summary
- Background – aim, objectives, scope, participating organisations
- Outline the scenario and planning process
- Evaluation – commentary on objectives (observations, recommendations)
- Lessons Identified
- Areas for improvement
- Recommend required changes
- Conclusions

141. A summary of the Exercise Report should be presented to the GTF at the next meeting following

completion of the After Action Review. The summary report should include lessons identified and recommended actions from which other departments or agencies may benefit.

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<sup>39</sup> National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (2016). P. 36

<sup>40</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security (2020). P. 5-10

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency planning (2019). P. 62

## PART FIVE

### INTEGRATING LESSONS IDENTIFIED

142. Improvement planning is a process by which the areas for improvement from the exercise are turned into concrete, measurable corrective actions that strengthen capabilities through integrating lessons identified into the future planning process.<sup>42</sup>

#### Developing SMART Corrective Actions

143. Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) corrective actions are actionable steps intended to resolve capability gaps and shortcomings identified in the After Action Review.

144. During development of corrective actions, the following questions should be used to guide the process:

- What changes to plans and procedures will improve performance?
- What changes to organisational structures will improve performance?
- What changes to management processes will improve performance?
- What changes to equipment or resources will improve performance?
- Was training provided and did the training improve performance?

#### Tracking and Implementation

145. Corrective actions captured in the After Action Review/Improvement Plan should be tracked and continually reported to the exercise sponsor until completion.

146. These efforts are part of a more comprehensive continuous improvement process that applies before, during, and after an exercise.

147. Departments and agencies should develop systems to ensure the inclusion of corrective actions into future plans and to validate their implementation through exercising.

148. The improvement planning process, including corrective actions, must be integrated into the Planning and Preparedness phase of the department's or agency's emergency planning process to ensure a continuous improvement cycle.

#### Supporting Continuous Improvement

149. Continuous improvement is a method by which emergency response arrangements are examined, at least annually if not more frequently, to make sure that they are available, accurate, and effective to handle the threats, hazards, and risks that a department or agency may face.

150. By continually examining the implementation of corrective actions, departments and agencies can identify capability gaps and determine what corrective actions require validation through further exercises.

151. Improvement planning activities can help shape a department or agency's emergency preparedness priorities and support continuous improvement in emergency management capabilities.

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<sup>42</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security (2020). P. 6-3

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## **Appendix 1 - Generic Emergency Response Plan Template**

- 1. Aim and objectives of the plan**
- 2. Links with External Plans (other departments/agencies)**
- 3. Trigger Event, Alert and Standby Procedures**
- 4. Activation procedures**
- 5. Contact details (key personnel)**
- 6. Points of contact (supporting departments and agencies)**
- 7. Roles & Responsibilities (emergency management group)**
- 8. Roles and Responsibilities (emergency support staff)**
- 9. Reporting structures**
- 10. Decision making authority**
- 11. Head of Emergency Operations**
- 12. Accommodation and Meetings (Physical/Cyberspace, Virtual/Inperson)**
- 13. The organisations response to emergencies**
- 14. Trigger or Threshold for convening a National Emergency Coordination Group (LGD only)**
- 15. National Emergency Coordination Group Trigger authority (LGD only)**
- 16. Access arrangement for the National Emergency Coordination**

**17. Minute takers**

**18. Information Management Systems**

**19. Briefing Arrangements for Minister**

**20. Media Plan (Communications Subgroup)**

**21. Accessing budgetary supports**

**22. Stand-down Procedures**

**23. Identification of Recovery Phase**

**24. Identification of LGD for Recovery if different (LGD only)**

**25. Reference to National Risk Assessment and SEM documents**

**26. Emergency Plan maintenance procedures (reviewed annually)**

**27. Plan exercises schedule**

**28. Additional LGD specific requirements**



## **Appendix 2 - Scenario Specific Emergency Response Plan Template**

- 1. Aim and objectives of the plan**
- 2. Links to External Plans (Other Departments/Agencies)**
- 3. Scenario Specific Information (Reason for requirement)**
- 4. Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessment**
- 5. Mitigation Measures**
- 6. Trigger Event, Alert and Standby Procedures**
- 7. Activation procedures**
- 8. Roles of Supporting Departments or Agencies**
- 9. Points of contact (supporting departments and agencies)**
- 10. Trigger or Threshold for convening a National Emergency Coordination Group (LGD Only)**
- 11. Access arrangement for the NECC from where the response will be coordinated**
- 12. Information Management Systems**
- 13. Media Plan (Communications Subgroup)**
- 14. Mechanism to access budgetary supports**
- 15. Plan maintenance procedures (reviewed annually).**
- 16. Plan exercises schedule**
- 17. Training schedule**

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