

IX. TRAINING AND EXERCISES

Past experience has shown that preparedness efforts are key to providing an effective response to major terrorist incidents and natural disasters. Therefore, we need a comprehensive system to bring together and command all necessary response assets quickly and effectively. We must train, equip, and exercise many different response units to mobilize for any emergency without warning.

—National Strategy for Homeland Security, July 2002

A. References:

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Exercise Design Course (G120) Student Manual, August 1995

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Exercise Evaluation Course (G130) Student Manual, November 1992

Federal Emergency Management Agency, Hazardous Materials Exercise Evaluation Methodology Manual, February 1992

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, "Certified Hazardous Materials Response Teams in Pennsylvania" Emergency Management Directive

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, "Compensation for Accidental Injury" Emergency Management Directive

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, "Comprehensive Exercise Program," Emergency Management Directive

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Exercise Design and Evaluation Course, July 15-17, 2003

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, "Official Enrollment of Emergency Management Volunteers" Emergency Management Directive

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, "Training and Test Authorization Forms" Emergency Management Directive

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Code, 35 Pa. C.C. 7101-7707, as amended

SARA Title III: The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Domestic Preparedness, Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, March 2003

B. Introduction

1. Effective approaches to planning, training, and exercises shall be developed to mitigate the effects of natural and manmade disasters. County and local personnel, with the assistance of PEMA, must prepare to prevent and respond to all hazards and threats to public safety. This must include threats from terrorism involving the use of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive (CBRNE) weapons. Homeland security professionals at all levels of government and in all types of communities must be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to identify, prevent, respond to, and recover from the aftermath of any disaster.
2. The goal of the County Emergency Management Agency is to coordinate a fully integrated countywide emergency response system that is adaptable and flexible enough to deal with all hazards, including terrorism, no matter how unlikely or catastrophic.

C. Policy

1. Because exercises are a critical component of a well-rounded emergency management program, properly conducted exercises will ensure a more effective response to an actual emergency. The County Emergency Management Agency engages in a continuous, challenging, comprehensive, and progressive exercise program based on a four-year exercise cycle and is in concert with PEMA Emergency Management Directive, "Comprehensive Exercise Program."

D. Exercise Program

1. The exercise program in the County shall be on a four-year cycle with at least one full-scale exercise every fourth year and at least one functional exercise in each of the other three years of the cycle.
2. The County will encourage full participation by local jurisdictions in this program. The County will also, to the maximum extent possible, participate in exercises conducted by the Regional Counter Terrorism Task Force.
3. Exercises should be conducted so that each emergency response function may be exercised periodically. Actual occurrences may be substituted for exercises. Additional exercises should be conducted to ensure the required skills and readiness are maintained by all of the emergency response organizations.
4. The exercise program should be developed on a cycle starting with the testing of basic skills and increasing in complexity and coordination to culminate in the full-scale exercise every fourth year. The cycle will then be repeated to ensure the retention of proficiency of each organization in the basic skills. Types of exercises, from the most

basic to the most complex, are: orientation seminar; drill; tabletop exercise; functional exercise; and full-scale exercise (exercise types are defined in PEMA Directive No. _____, Emergency Management Training and Education).

When participating in an Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), Terrorism Consequence Management Performance Agreement (TCMPA), and/or Office of Justice Programs/Office of Domestic Preparedness (OJP/ODP) funded exercise, the county may include their own exercise objectives. These exercises will be incorporated into the County's overall exercise plan.

Procedures for obtaining exercise authorization and approval of training requests are contained in the "Comprehensive Exercise Program" and "Training and Test Authorization Forms" Directives.

E. General Characteristics of a Strong Exercise Program

1. The two major reasons for conducting exercises are:
 - a. Capability assessment: To determine whether a system (equipment, plans, and organization) functions as anticipated under non-routine conditions, and if not, to identify actions required for improved performance; determine actual operational readiness and response capabilities as compared to expectations;
 - b. Training: To provide people/organizations with an opportunity to practice the knowledge and skills required to carry out non-routine functions and/or identify areas in which current knowledge and skills are inadequate.
2. Exercises:
 - a. Develop proficiency and competence of participants;
 - b. Test plans and procedures;
 - c. Enhance community capabilities for emergency response;
 - d. Enhance public information proficiency and increase public awareness;
 - e. Improve cooperation among County government and the private sector;
 - f. Improve public policies regarding community readiness;
 - g. Will motivate decision makers to allocate resources to emergency management by illustrating the complexity and potential impact of emergencies;

- h. Should be part of the normal functioning of an organization and should be included in the yearly budget as a routine cost of doing business;
- i. May result in a volunteer being injured. If this does occur, the emergency volunteer may be entitled to receive benefits as discussed in the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Code; PEMA Directive, "Official Enrollment of Emergency Management Volunteers;" PEMA Directive, "Training and Test Authorization Forms;" and PEMA Directive, "Compensation for Accidental Injury;"
- j. Should focus on the emergency support functions as discussed in this plan. Each functional area should be exercised at least once each year, either separately or as part of a major exercise;
- k. Primary scenarios should be rotated between natural hazards, technological/man-made hazards, and acts of terrorism;
- l. Should be built logically one on another, progressively increasing the skill levels and stress during the four-year exercise cycle;
- m. Must be continuous to ensure skills and readiness are maintained in view of changes in plans, improved resources, personnel changes and new challenges;
- n. Must be well planned to meet specific goals and objectives; and
- o. Have inherent costs in time, personnel, resources, political concerns.

F. Evaluation – Lessons Learned – Best Practices

To be effective exercises must be thoroughly, accurately, and objectively evaluated against measurable expected standards. Evaluations will reveal deficiencies in plans, inadequacy of resources, and ineffectiveness of training. Evaluations will also reveal strong areas of the emergency management organization.

Exercises and the resultant After Action Reports (AARs) provide lessons for the exercise participants, but also provide a valuable source of information that can be analyzed at the county level to identify lessons learned and best practices that can be shared to enhance preparedness across the county. Exercise AARs should identify lessons learned, as well as, highlight exemplary practices, and should be compiled for inclusion in the county's exercise database.