

About HSEEP

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) is a capabilities and performance-based exercise program which provides a standardized policy, methodology, and terminology for exercise design, development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. HSEEP Policy and Guidance is presented in detail in HSEEP Volumes I-III. Adherence to the policy and guidance presented in the HSEEP Volumes ensures that exercise programs conform to established best practices and helps provide unity and consistency of effort for exercises at all levels of government.

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HSEEP 101

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HSEEP 101 Printable PDF: NED is currently revising the HSEEP 101 document and will re-post a revised version in the near future.

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Exercises allow homeland security and emergency management personnel, from first responders to senior officials, to train and practice prevention, protection, response, and recovery capabilities in a realistic but risk-free environment. Exercises are also a valuable tool for assessing and improving performance, while demonstrating community resolve to prepare for major incidents.

Through exercises, the [Department of Homeland Security](#) Preparedness Directorate aims to help entities obtain objective assessments of their capabilities so that gaps, deficiencies, and vulnerabilities are identified and remedied prior to a real incident.

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) is a capabilities and performance-based exercise program. The intent of HSEEP is to provide common exercise policy and program guidance capable of constituting a national standard for all exercises. HSEEP includes consistent terminology that can be used by all exercise planners, regardless of the nature and composition of their sponsoring agency or organization.

The HSEEP Volumes, a series of program and reference manuals, integrate language and concepts from the [National Response Framework \(NRF\)](#), the [National Incident Management System \(NIMS\)](#), the National Preparedness Guidelines, the Universal Task List (UTL), the Target Capabilities List (TCL), existing exercise programs, and representative prevention and response protocols from all levels of government. The HSEEP policy and doctrine is organized into the following volumes:

HSEEP Volume I: HSEEP Overview and Exercise Program Management provides guidance for building and maintaining an effective exercise program and summarizes the planning and evaluation process described in further detail in Volumes II through V.

HSEEP Volume II: Exercise Planning and Conduct helps planners outline a standardized foundation, design, development, and conduct process adaptable to any type of exercise.

HSEEP Volume III: Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning offers proven methodology for evaluating and documenting exercises and implementing an improvement plan.

HSEEP Volume IV: Sample Exercise Documents and Formats provides sample exercise materials referenced in HSEEP Volumes I, II, III, and V.

HSEEP Volume V: Prevention Exercises contains guidance consistent with the HSEEP model to assist jurisdictions in designing and evaluating exercises that test pre-incident capabilities such as intelligence analysis and information sharing.

HSEEP reflects lessons learned and best practices of existing exercise programs and can be adapted to a variety of scenarios and events (e.g., natural disasters, terrorism, technological disasters).

The DHS Preparedness Directorate is responsible for updating and disseminating the HSEEP reference volumes on behalf of the Department.

HSEEP is compliant with and complements several historical and current Federal directives and initiatives. Some of these directives and policies include the following:

National Strategy for Homeland Security

[HSPD-5, Management of Domestic Incidents](#)

[HSPD-8, National Preparedness](#)

National Exercise Program (NEP)

National Preparedness System

[NIMS](#)

The methodology of HSEEP was based on proven exercise design, development, and evaluation methods from other programs. There are three exercise programs that had a significant influence on HSEEP during its development. These programs include the following:

Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP). The key ties to HSEEP are the recognition of increased hazards associated with critical infrastructure and hazardous materials and contribution of evaluation methodology.

Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP) Program. The key ties to HSEEP are that REP was the first major exercise program to involve local first responders in biannual exercise activities and that it helped contribute to the evaluation methodology.

Nunn-Lugar-Domenici (NLD) Domestic Preparedness Program. The key tie to HSEEP was that NLD was the springboard to the NEP and was the first program to recognize an increased hazard in the Nation's urban centers. It contributed many of the lessons learned and best practices for the design and development methodology.

The Blended Approach to HSEEP Implementation

In addition to providing a standardized policy, methodology, and language for project

management, HSEEP facilitates the creation of self-sustaining capabilities-based exercise programs by providing program management resources such as policy and guidance, training, technology, and direct support. The elements of this blended approach include the following:

Policy and Doctrine. HSEEP promulgates policy and doctrine for all exercises through HSEEP Volumes I-V, which provide exercise planners with common processes, consistent terminology, and tested policies that are practical and flexible enough to be applied regardless of the nature of the exercising entity. The HSEEP Volumes integrate language and concepts from the NRF, NIMS, the National Preparedness Guidelines, UTL, TCL, and existing exercise programs.

Training. Training opportunities are provided to familiarize exercise planners, evaluators, facilitators, controllers, and participants in HSEEP policy and doctrine. *Independent Study (IS)–120.A, An Introduction to Exercises* is an online, beginner-level HSEEP course that provides basic instruction in exercise design and terminology. The HSEEP Training Course is an intermediate-level training course that incorporates exercise guidance and best practices from the HSEEP Volumes to educate participants about exercise program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning.

Technology. The HSEEP Toolkit is a web-based system of tools which provides a seamless collaborative environment for exercise planners. The Toolkit provides integrated tools for the five phases of exercise project management, such as an exercise planning tutorial, templates for exercise documentation, and a tracking system for action items identified during exercise evaluation. The Toolkit also includes an exercise program management tool to assist with short, medium, and long-term program management.

Direct Support. The National Exercise Division provides direct exercise support, in the form of vendor assistance, to help States and local jurisdictions with the design, development, conduct, and evaluation of exercises in accordance with HSEEP. Direct support is also available to help States and local jurisdictions conduct the HSEEP Training Course and Training and Exercise Plan Workshops (TEPWs).

HSEEP Terminology and Methodology

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A consistent terminology and methodology for exercises is critical to avoiding confusion, and to ensuring that entities can exercise together seamlessly. This section provides a high-level overview of key components of HSEEP terminology and methodology.

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Exercise Types

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There are seven types of exercises defined within HSEEP, each of which is either discussions-based or operations-based.

Discussion-based Exercises familiarize participants with current plans, policies, agreements, and procedures, or may be used to develop new plans, policies, agreements, and procedures. Types of Discussion-based Exercises include:

Seminar. A seminar is an informal discussion, designed to orient participants to new or updated plans, policies, or procedures (e.g., a seminar to review a new Evacuation Standard Operating Procedure).

Workshop. A workshop resembles a seminar but is employed to build specific products, such as a draft plan or policy (e.g., a Training and Exercise Plan Workshop is used to develop a Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan).

Tabletop Exercise (TTX). A tabletop exercise involves key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting. TTXs can be used to assess plans, policies, and procedures.

Games. A game is a simulation of operations that often involves two or more teams, usually in a competitive environment, using rules, data, and procedure designed to depict an actual or assumed real-life situation.

Operations-based Exercises validate plans, policies, agreements and procedures; clarify roles and responsibilities; and identify resource gaps in an operational environment. Types of Operations-based Exercises include:

Drill. A drill is a coordinated, supervised activity usually employed to test a single specific operation or function within a single entity (e.g., a fire department conducts a decontamination drill).

Functional Exercise (FE). A functional exercise examines and/or validates the coordination, command, and control between various multi-agency coordination centers (e.g., emergency operation center, joint field office, etc.). A functional exercise does not involve any "boots on the ground" (i.e., first responders or emergency officials responding to an incident in real time).

Full-Scale Exercises (FSE). A full-scale exercise is a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline exercise involving functional (e.g., joint field office, emergency operation centers, etc.) and "boots on the ground" response (e.g., firefighters decontaminating mock victims).

Exercise Documentation

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The list below briefly describes the important document types associated with most exercises. The types of documentation described here are all discussed in more detail in *HSEEP Volume II: Exercise Planning and Conduct*.

A Situation Manual (SitMan) is a participant handbook for discussion-based exercises, particularly TTXs. It provides background information on exercise scope, schedule, and objectives. It also presents the scenario narrative that will drive participant discussions during the exercise.

The Exercise Plan (ExPlan), typically used for operations-based exercises, provides a synopsis of the exercise and is published and distributed to players and observers prior to the start of the exercise. The ExPlan includes the exercise objectives and scope, safety procedures, and logistical considerations such as an exercise schedule. The ExPlan does not contain detailed scenario information.

The Controller and Evaluator (C/E) Handbook supplements the ExPlan for operations-based exercises, containing more detailed information about the exercise scenario and describing exercise controllers' and evaluators' roles and responsibilities. Because the C/E Handbook contains information on the scenario and exercise administration, it is distributed only to those individuals specifically designated as controllers or evaluators.

The Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) is a chronological timeline of expected actions and scripted events (i.e., injects) to be inserted into operations-based

exercise play by controllers in order to generate or prompt player activity. It ensures necessary events happen so that all exercise objectives are met.

A Player Handout is a 1-2 page document usually handed out the morning of an exercise which provides a quick reference for exercise players on safety procedures, logistical considerations, exercise schedule, and other key factors and information.

Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs) help evaluators collect and interpret relevant exercise observations. EEGs provide evaluators with information on what tasks they should expect to see accomplished during an exercise, space to record observations, and questions to address after the exercise as a first step in the analysis process. In order to assist entities in exercise evaluation, standardized EEGs have been created that reflect capabilities-based planning tools, such as the Target Capabilities List (TCL) and the Universal Task List (UTL). The EEGs are not meant as report cards. Rather, they are intended to guide an evaluator's observations so that the evaluator focuses on capabilities and tasks relevant to exercise objectives to support development of the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP).

An After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) is the final product of an exercise. The AAR/IP has two components: an AAR, which captures observations and recommendations based on the exercise objectives as associated with the capabilities and tasks and an IP, which identifies specific corrective actions, assigns them to responsible parties, and establishes targets for their completion. The lead evaluator and the exercise planning team draft the AAR and submit it to conference participants prior to an After Action Conference (see below). The draft AAR is distributed to conference participants for review no more than 30 days after exercise conduct. The final AAR/IP is an outcome of the After Action Conference and should be disseminated to participants no more than 60 days after exercise conduct.

Planning and After Action Conferences

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The HSEEP methodology defines a variety of planning and after action conferences. The need for each of these conferences varies depending on the type and scope of the exercise. They include:

- Concepts and Objectives Meeting
- Initial Planning Conference (IPC)
- Mid-Term Planning Conference (MPC)
- Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) Conference
- Final Planning Conference (FPC)
- After Action Conference (AAC)

HSEEP Volume II: Exercise Planning and Conduct provides details on the outcomes, products, and associated timelines for each of these planning conferences.