

# **NATIONAL EXERCISE PROGRAM**



**March 18, 2011**



# FEMA

March 18, 2011

Pursuant to the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended, I am pleased to present the new National Exercise Program (NEP) Base Plan.

As directed by Secretary Napolitano and in close collaboration with our federal interagency partners, the National Security Staff (NSS), National Advisory Council, and other stakeholders, the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS/FEMA) conducted an extensive effort to revise and improve the NEP. As the success of the NEP derives from the participation and collaboration of stakeholders from across the entire emergency management and homeland security enterprise, I would like to thank all of our partners for their conscientious review and feedback throughout the NEP revision process.

The purpose of the NEP Base Plan is to provide a strategically focused foundational document of the principles and tenets of the NEP. The revised program will provide for a more aggressive, realistic, agile, and collaborative exercise system. Specifically, the NEP will incorporate the following elements:

- ***Progressive Cycle:*** The NEP will be conducted within a two-year progressive exercise cycle. The cycle will incorporate a wide array of exercises that link to common objectives, involve multiple participants at various levels of government, validate a broad range of scenarios, and will be designed with an increasing degree of complexity over time. The first NEP cycle will commence in January 2013.
- ***"Whole Community" Collaborative Approach:*** The NEP will include select exercises at the state, local, territorial, and tribal levels that are aligned to the Principal Objectives within each cycle. In addition, the NEP will incorporate exercises involving the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and the general public. This collaborative approach will enable the participation of a wider range of players and will foster better coordination and working relationships across the emergency management enterprise.
- ***Senior Leadership Led:*** A newly strengthened governance structure will elevate the active stewardship of the NEP to reinvigorated policy committees within the White House and enable members of the Homeland Security Council Principals Committee to establish the exercise objectives for the Nation.

Development of a collaborative NEP Implementation Plan will provide the details of the program performance, scoping of individual department and agency involvement, exercise selection, and formulation of the exercise program. We look forward to working with our partners in developing the NEP Implementation Plan, planning the inaugural cycle, and incorporating the new NEP tenets into future exercises.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Craig Fugate".

W. Craig Fugate  
Administrator, FEMA

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## **1. Purpose**

An effective National Exercise Program (NEP) is an essential component of our national preparedness. It validates our plans, tests our operational capabilities, maintains leadership effectiveness, and examines the ways we utilize our “whole community” to prevent, protect from, respond to, recover from, and mitigate disasters and acts of terrorism. Exercises enable us to practice and refine our collective capacity to confront a variety of potential threats and hazards while discovering problems and identifying gaps in policies and procedures. A truly “national” exercise program is one that fosters the meaningful and systematic interaction of public officials at every level of jurisdiction while incorporating the participation of private-sector, faith-based, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—along with the public—against a set of common objectives. By linking together exercises from across the country and at all levels of government, the NEP can leverage the people and resources of the entire homeland security enterprise and channel those assets efficiently and effectively toward a higher level of national preparedness.

- 1.1 *Mission:* The National Exercise Program’s mission is to serve as the principal exercise mechanism for examining the preparedness and measuring the readiness of the United States across the entire homeland security enterprise by designing, coordinating, conducting, and evaluating a progressive cycle of exercises that rigorously tests the Nation’s ability to perform missions or functions that prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.
- 1.2 *Scope:* The National Exercise Program is designed to incorporate participants and exercises from all States, territories, and the District of Columbia. When appropriate, international partners will be incorporated into specific NEP exercises. Officials within the Executive Branch of the Federal Government are primary stakeholders in the NEP and, as such, many of the NEP exercises are designed to meet their exercise requirements. However, as a reflection of the fact that the NEP is a truly national program and that our Nation’s preparedness requires a “whole community” approach to succeed, the NEP also includes a focus on, and the active participation of, State, local, tribal, territorial (SLTT), private-sector, NGOs, non-profits, and faith-based partners, as well as the public.

## **2. Authorities and References**

The NEP is established by United States Code (USC), Title 6, Chapter 2, Subchapter II, Part A, Section 748(b)(1), and directs that “the [Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)] Administrator, in coordination with the heads of appropriate Federal agencies, the National Council on Disability, and the National Advisory Council, shall carry out a national exercise program to test and evaluate the national preparedness goal, National Incident Management System (NIMS), National Response Plan [now the National Response Framework (NRF)], and other related plans and strategies.”

The NEP is also based upon the following<sup>1</sup>:

- 2.1 *6 U.S.C. § 1136 (d)* directs that security exercises for public transportation agencies be a component of the NEP.
- 2.2 *6 U.S.C. § 1166 (d)* directs that security exercises for railroad carriers be a component of the NEP.
- 2.3 *Public Law 111-353, Section 208* directs that food safety exercises to evaluate and identify weaknesses in the decontamination and disposal model plans be a component of the NEP.
- 2.4 *National Security Presidential Directive 51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 20* directs the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary to develop, lead, and conduct a Federal continuity training and exercise program, which shall be incorporated into the NEP.
- 2.5 *Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8* (HSPD-8) directs the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, to establish a national program to conduct homeland security preparedness-related exercises. HSPD-8 requires that all Federal departments and agencies that conduct national homeland security preparedness-related exercises shall participate in a collaborative, interagency process to designate such exercises on a consensus basis and create a master exercise calendar. Finally, HSPD-8 requires that Federal departments and agencies will identify their level of participation in national homeland security preparedness-related exercises at the time the exercises are so designated.

This document and the information contained herein supersede the National Exercise Program Charter memorandum dated January 26, 2007.

### **3. Terms of Reference**

The following are key concepts and terms for the NEP:

- 3.1 *Homeland Security Enterprise*: the collective of SLTT governments, the Federal interagency, non-governmental and faith-based organizations, the private sector, the public, and their respective homeland security missions.
- 3.2 *Exercise*: the employment of personnel and resources in a controlled environment to test, validate, and/or improve a specific plan or capability in pursuit of a stated objective within the homeland security enterprise. Exercises are distinct from training events and may include workshops, facilitated policy discussions, seminars, tabletop exercises (TTXs), games, modeling and simulation (M&S), drills, functional exercises (FEs), and full-scale exercises (FSEs).
- 3.3 *“Whole Community”*: an incident response planning principle seeking a more effective and holistic collaboration with all members of a community, to include all elements of the homeland security enterprise.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Secretary of Homeland Security Memorandum dated August 17, 2010, which directs the provision of a revised National Exercise Program.

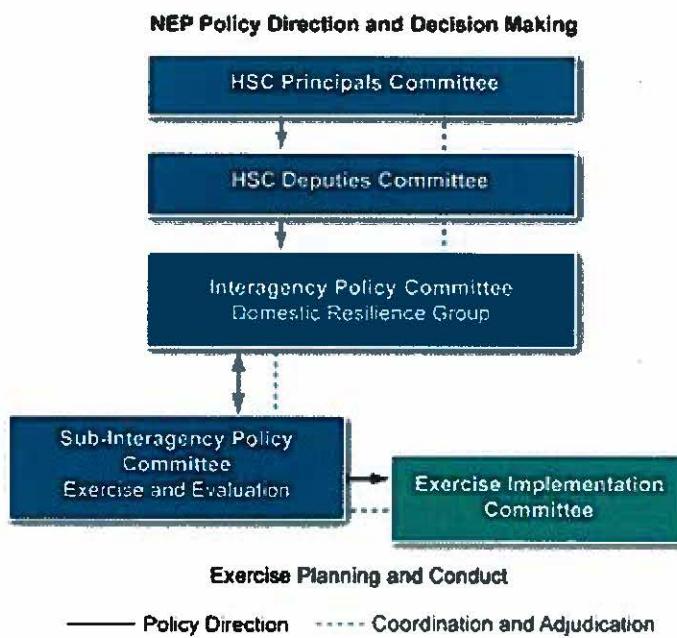
- 3.4 *Progressive Exercise Cycle*: a discrete array of exercises that is anchored to a common set of objectives, built toward an increasing level of complexity over time, and involves the participation of multiple entities. A progressive exercise cycle allows the involved organizations to test their implementation of prevention and incident management procedures, as well as their coordination with each other in the process. A two-year, progressive exercise structure comprises the entirety of each NEP cycle.
- 3.5 *Objectives-Based Planning*: a planning approach in which overarching central objectives serve as the basis of the exercise program and the primary drivers of exercise development. Objectives take three forms: 1) Principal Objectives; 2) general objectives; and 3) exercise-specific objectives.
- 3.6 *Principal Objectives*: critical, high-level functions, missions, and priorities across the homeland security enterprise established by the White House and the Homeland Security Council (HSC) Principals Committee (PC), pursuant to their specific priorities and concerns. NEP Principal Objectives are based on strategic priorities and set the direction for each two-year NEP cycle. They are set approximately every two years.
- 3.7 *General Objectives*: operational priorities identified by Federal departments and agencies, non-Federal partners, and statutory requirements that are incorporated into the NEP Cycle to achieve the Principal Objectives. General objectives will be issued by the Domestic Resilience Group (DRG).
- 3.8 *Exercise-Specific Objectives*: objectives, capabilities, or event-specific actions that are tested in an individual exercise and are incorporated into the exercise design accordingly. The preponderance of exercise-specific objectives within an NEP exercise shall tie directly to one or more of the Principal Objectives and/or general objectives. Exercise-specific objectives for Federal NEP exercises will be coordinated by the Exercise and Evaluation sub-Interagency Policy Committee (E&E sub-IPC), for review by the DRG.
- 3.9 *Domestic Resilience Group (DRG)*: a standing committee of senior Federal department and agency representatives. For the NEP, the DRG will issue general objectives; coordinate exercise policy; provide strategic input, program guidance, and feedback on NEP exercises; and approve exercise plans, participation policies, and procedures for use in national-level and senior-level exercises.
- 3.10 *Exercise and Evaluation sub-Interagency Policy Committee (E&E sub-IPC)*: a standing committee of senior Federal department and agency representatives authorized to make policy recommendations on exercise related issues who coordinate exercise-specific objectives for review by the DRG and coordinate NEP planning and scheduling.
- 3.11 *Exercise Implementation Committee (EIC)*: a standing committee of senior representatives, predominantly from Federal departments and agencies, who are responsible for the implementation of NEP directives. EIC members execute primary exercise planning responsibilities within their organizations in support of the NEP; provide support to each exercise-specific working group as required; and serve as trusted agents for exercise planning purposes. The EIC will be chaired by FEMA/National Exercise Division (FEMA/NED).

- 3.12 *Exercise-Specific Working Group*: a temporary group of planning representatives from NEP stakeholder communities that manages the design and planning process of an individual NEP exercise. Exercise-specific working groups are established and chaired by FEMA/NED and, as required, co-chaired by a subject-matter-specific Federal department or agency or a member of the homeland security enterprise.
- 3.13 *Senior-Level Exercises*: tabletop and functional exercises that are centered on strategy, decision-making, policy issues, and lines of authority that require the participation of senior government officials at various jurisdictional levels.
- 3.14 *National-Level Exercise (NLE)*: a singular, capstone exercise conducted every two years as the final component of each NEP progressive exercise cycle. Federal departments and agencies will participate in each NLE to the extent appropriate, as determined by the Homeland Security Council (HSC) Principal's Committee. State, local, tribal, and territorial entities will participate in accordance with their agreement with the NED. The NLE within the NEP will satisfy the biennial national exercise requirement established in 6 U.S.C. § 748(b)(3).
- 3.15 *The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)*: HSEEP provides exercise guidance and principles based on national best practices that constitute a national standard for homeland security exercises.
- 3.16 *National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) System*: an online comprehensive scheduling tool that facilitates the visibility, de-confliction, and synchronization of all homeland security exercises nationwide.
- 3.17 *Modeling*: employment of a physical, mathematical, or otherwise logical representation of a system at some particular point in time and/or space intended to promote an expanded understanding of the real system.
- 3.18 *Simulation*: a method for the implementation of a model or a combination of models over time.

#### **4. Governance**

The NEP will be guided by the policy direction and decision-making provided by the HSC Principals Committee and its subordinate executive branch committees. These committees will also adjudicate NEP issues as they arise from the interagency exercise community, as required. Approximately every two years, the HSC Principals Committee will issue the Principal Objectives following an HSC Principals' Committee meeting that will drive the subsequent NEP cycle. On occasion, the HSC Principals Committee may also revisit and revise the Principal Objectives, provide specific guidance to major interagency FSEs, or issue additional direction based on changing national priorities. On a regular basis, however, the DRG and its E&E sub-IPC will provide the routine guidance and direction to the NEP.

At the operational level, the EIC, chaired by FEMA/NED, will be the primary agent for guiding the design, planning, and execution of each NEP event. **Figure 4-1** depicts the governance structure of the NEP.



**Figure 4-1: NEP Governance Structure**  
*The NEP governance structure engages senior Federal officials and utilizes the interagency policy process to resolve issues.*

4.1 *Interagency Roles and Responsibilities:* the following Federal officials and bodies will play important roles in the governance of the NEP:

4.1.1 Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (APHS-CT)

- Solicit Principal Objectives from the HSC Principals Committee
- Issue Principal Objectives approved by the HSC Principals Committee
- Provide strategic exercise planning guidance through the National Security Staff (NSS) to the DRG

4.1.2 HSC Principals Committee

- Participate in the setting of Principal Objectives
- Establish and periodically validate Principal Objectives for each biennial NEP cycle through the HSC Principals Committee
- Based on recommendations from the Domestic Resilience Group (DRG), establish and periodically validate participation in NEP exercises by relevant Federal departments and agencies in order to meet the Principal Objectives
- Ensure appropriate participation and resourcing of NEP exercises

#### 4.1.3 National Security Staff (NSS)

- Coordinate NEP-related activities within the White House
- Oversee the progress of corrective action implementation from NEP exercises for all Federal departments and agencies to ensure priority issues are assigned and completed within a specific timeframe
- Coordinate White House-level participation in exercises

#### 4.1.4 Domestic Resilience Group (DRG)

- Coordinate exercise policy and provide interagency input, program guidance, and feedback on NEP exercises
- Approve exercise plans, policies, and procedures for use in national-level and senior-level exercises
- Review and approve exercises nominated by their sponsoring departments and agencies for inclusion in the NEP cycle
- Issue general objectives for each NEP cycle
- Recommend to the HSC Principals Committee specific NEP exercises that require participation among relevant Federal departments and agencies
- Recommend Federal participation in Federal interagency exercises that are outside the scope of the NEP cycle
- Utilize collaborative interagency and Executive Secretariat notification processes to recommend objectives, participation, and other issues to the HSC Principals Committee for guidance or decisions
- Account for the resource and scheduling priorities of the Federal interagency for NEP, non-NEP, legacy, internal, classified, intermittent, military, international, and other exercises

#### 4.1.5 Exercise and Evaluation sub-Interagency Policy Committee (E&E sub-IPC)

- Support the DRG in the concept development, scoping, scaling, and resourcing of interagency NEP exercises
- Coordinate exercise-specific objectives for review by the DRG
- Coordinate NEP planning and scheduling
- Coordinate exercise evaluation and after-action processes
- Review and nominate other exercises to the DRG that are outside the scope of the NEP cycle but would benefit from Federal interagency participation

#### 4.1.6 Exercise Implementation Committee (EIC)

- Execute primary exercise planning responsibilities within their organizations in support of the NEP
- Provide members to each exercise-specific working group, as required
- Serve as trusted agents for exercise planning purposes

- If necessary, issues requiring adjudication by policy makers, submit to the Exercise and Evaluation sub-IPC
- Develop courses of action for each approved general objective from the Federal departments and agencies

#### 4.1.7 National Council on Disability (NCD)

- Coordinate with FEMA in carrying out the NEP
- Provide guidance on the homeland security-related priorities and needs of individuals with disabilities
- Nominate objectives for consideration for inclusion in the NEP cycle through the FEMA Administrator on behalf of stakeholders

#### 4.1.8 Federal departments and agencies

- Provide an appropriate level of participation for NEP exercises and planning events based on their roles, responsibilities, and relevance to the Principal Objectives each NEP cycle
- Identify and submit general objectives to the DRG
- Provide input, as appropriate, on the development of exercise-specific objectives
- Actively participate in the corrective action process and maintain a corrective action program within each department and agency
- Forecast and budget for exercise personnel and resources to participate in NEP exercises
- Report exercises into the NEXS System
- Designate an exercise and evaluation point of contact (POC) for programmatic coordination with FEMA/NED
- Assist in the coordination and facilitation of regional, State, local, tribal, territorial, private sector, faith-based organizations, NGOs, non-profits, and the public into the NEP through existing Federal interagency regional administrators and coordinators

### 4.2 DHS Roles and Responsibilities: The following DHS officials and offices will play the following roles in the NEP:

#### 4.2.1 Secretary of Homeland Security

- Participate in the setting of Principal Objectives
- Establish and periodically validate Principal Objectives for each biennial NEP cycle through the HSC Principals Committee
- Review and provide strategic exercise planning guidance to the FEMA Administrator

#### 4.2.2 FEMA Administrator

- In coordination with the heads of appropriate Federal departments and agencies, carry out the NEP to test and evaluate the national preparedness goal, NIMS, NRF, and other related plans and strategies<sup>2</sup>
- Periodically, but not less than biennially, perform national exercises that have the purpose of testing and evaluating the capability of the Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to detect, disrupt, and prevent threatened or actual catastrophic acts of terrorism, especially those involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD)<sup>3</sup>
- Periodically, but not less than biennially, perform national exercises that have the purpose of testing and evaluating the readiness of Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to respond and recover in a coordinated and unified manner to catastrophic incidents<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.2.3 National Exercise Division (FEMA/NED)

- Provide counsel to the Secretary of Homeland Security and the FEMA Administrator on the two-year progressive exercise objectives, exercise guidance, and NEP schedule
- Facilitate day-to-day operations of the NEP, and guide the planning and conduct of Federal participation in NEP exercises
- Manage all logistics, coordination, and administrative tasks for the NEP
- Oversee HSEEP and supporting doctrine and systems for support of the NEP
- Serve as chair of the EIC
- Coordinate participation in national-level and senior-level exercises, as appropriate
- Coordinate all activities with SLTTs through the applicable FEMA Region
- Identify and nominate the range of exercises to be incorporated into each NEP cycle, in coordination with Federal interagency partners, the FEMA Regions, national organizations, and others, as appropriate
- Develop exercise-specific directives in coordination with the Federal departments and agencies
- Organize and coordinate individual exercise working groups, as needed, to assist with the development of exercise-specific directives and the planning of individual exercises
- Coordinate with Federal departments and agencies to ensure effective interagency evaluation and after-action reporting for national-level and senior-level exercises

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<sup>2</sup> 6 U.S.C. §748(b)

<sup>3</sup> 6 U.S.C. §748(b)

<sup>4</sup> 6 U.S.C. §748(b)

- Oversee the development of the NEP Rolling Summary Report in coordination with appropriate Federal departments and agencies
- Ensure that After Action Reports and Improvement Plans (AAR/IPs), including corrective actions, are generated in a timely fashion following the completion of exercises

- Manage the operation of the Corrective Action Program (CAP) System
- Report corrective action status to the NSS for tracking and oversight

#### 4.2.4 National Preparedness Assessments Division (NPAD)

- In collaboration with FEMA/NED and in coordination with appropriate departments and agencies, develop performance measures and benchmarking metrics for NEP exercises to support larger preparedness assessments and trend analysis
- Ensure observations, lessons learned, and best practices from all NEP exercises are promptly submitted to *Lessons Learned Information Sharing* (LLIS.gov)

#### 4.2.5 FEMA Regional Administrators

- Assist in the coordination and facilitation of regional, State, local, tribal, territorial, private sector, faith-based organizations, NGOs, non-profits, and the public into the NEP
- Nominate objectives for consideration for inclusion in the NEP cycle through the FEMA Administrator on behalf of stakeholders
- Facilitate the reporting of exercises into the NEXS System

#### 4.2.6 National Advisory Council (NAC)

- Coordinate with FEMA in providing input and recommendations on the NEP
- Provide guidance on incorporating the priorities of FEMA's partners and stakeholders at the State, local, tribal, territorial, private-sector, faith-based, and NGO levels
- Nominate objectives for consideration for inclusion in the NEP cycle through the FEMA Administrator on behalf of stakeholders

## **5. Concept of Operations**

The NEP will be conducted as a two-year, progressive exercise cycle based on an identified set of Principal Objectives and corresponding general objectives. Based on these objectives, the NEP will incorporate, to the highest degree possible, existing exercises established by the Federal interagency and SLTT governments. Specifically, each NEP cycle will feature: 1) a series of Federal interagency-controlled senior-level exercises; and 2) exercises of all types at the SLTT levels as well as exercises within the private sector, non-governmental, and faith-based organizations that will be invited to be incorporated into the NEP schedule. Each NEP cycle will culminate in a national-level, NEP capstone exercise that will include participants from across the homeland security enterprise.

- 5.1 *Cycle:* The inaugural NEP cycle will commence on January 1, 2013. Each NEP cycle will be two (2) years in duration. Planning for each NEP cycle will begin no less than six (6) months prior to the commencement of that cycle.
- 5.2 *Objectives and Scenarios:* The NEP will be objectives-driven and capability-based, with established Principal Objectives driving the focus and schedule of each NEP cycle. The HSC Principals Committee will set the Principal Objectives for each cycle. In addition, some of the NEP Principal Objectives may be required by law or executive order.<sup>5</sup>

While scenarios will still provide the means to assess the capabilities associated with the Principal Objectives and ensure the presence or absence of a capability can be asserted with some proof, they will not serve as a driver of each cycle. Scenarios provide a vehicle by which to connect the exercise-specific objectives to current risk and threat assessment analysis by providing the necessary conditions to test the objectives. Scenarios also provide the means to place the objectives against a wide range of relevant situations, protect assessments against sudden swings in priorities, and test the objectives against the breadth of a larger strategy.

In the event that national priorities change or real-world events compel a mid-course adjustment to the NEP, the HSC Principals Committee may consider modifying the Principal Objectives to meet preparedness demands in an ever-changing homeland security environment.

- 5.3 *Participation:* Maintaining a dynamic and successful NEP that incorporates a “whole community” approach, including participation from the Homeland Security Enterprise, is critical to national preparedness. Active participation at all levels is one of the cornerstones of a truly national program.

To facilitate participation, the DRG will assemble, through an interagency collaborative process, a list of specific NEP exercises in which participation by relevant Federal departments and agencies should be required. That list shall be submitted, through the Executive Secretariat process, to the Deputies and HSC Principals Committees, which shall determine the participation of relevant Federal departments and agencies. In general, Federal departments and agencies will participate in the appropriate number of

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<sup>5</sup> For example, continuity and certain transportation security exercises are currently mandated to be incorporated into the NEP, as per National Security Presidential Directive 51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 20 and 6 U.S.C. § 1136 (d)/6 U.S.C. § 1166 (d), respectively.

NEP exercises that are required to evaluate the Principal Objectives and general objectives as feasible given operational and budgetary constraints. The extent and manner of each organization's participation will vary, subject to their respective missions relative to the NEP cycle's Principal Objectives. Participation by Federal departments and agencies in Federal interagency exercises that fall outside the scope of the NEP will be encouraged through the DRG as appropriate.

SLTT stakeholders and other partners who choose to participate and whose exercises are selected for inclusion in a NEP cycle will be offered various degrees of technical assistance, collaboration, networking, and evaluation assistance.

Participation recommendations and decisions should account for the resource and scheduling priorities of the Federal interagency for NEP, non-NEP, legacy, internal, classified, intermittent, military, international, and other exercises within the scope of Federal interagency real world operational commitments, evolving threat and risk forecasts, budget, resources, and other relevant variables.

- 5.4 *Exercise Selection:* FEMA/NED, in coordination with Federal interagency partners, the FEMA Regions, national organizations, and others, as appropriate, will identify prospective exercises to be incorporated into each NEP cycle. All exercises must be reported into the NEXS to be considered for inclusion in the NEP. The specific exercise selection criteria and selection procedures are detailed in the NEP Implementation Plan.

The DRG will review nominated Federal interagency exercises for inclusion in the NEP cycle, and will submit that list of exercises, through the Executive Secretariat process, to the HSC Principal's Committee for final approval.

- 5.5 *Planning and Scheduling:* The planning and scheduling of each two-year progressive NEP cycle begins with the establishment of Principal Objectives. The specific planning and scheduling process for the NEP is detailed in the NEP Implementation Plan.

The following principles will guide the planning and scheduling of NEP exercises:

- 5.5.1 The NEP shall be carried out, as appropriate, with a minimum degree of notice to involved parties regarding the timing and detail of such exercises consistent with safety considerations.
- 5.5.2 Exercises will be conducted with a high degree of realism and will be based on current risk assessment analyses.
- 5.5.3 Formal exercise planning and build-up activities will be scheduled and conducted in an efficient manner.
- 5.5.4 Each NEP cycle schedule should reflect geographic diversity.
- 5.5.5 Each NEP cycle will include a mix of all exercise types. The NEP exercise schedule will remain agile and flexible to allow for the inclusion of additional exercises to address findings from preceding exercises and to account for emerging threats.

5.6 *Composition:* Each cycle of the NEP will be objective-driven and responsive to changes in policy and lessons learned from previous exercises and actual events. Therefore, the number of exercises identified for inclusion to the NEP will vary, drawn from the catalog of exercises being conducted by Federal, SLTT, non-governmental, faith-based, and private-sector entities to the maximum extent possible. The NEP will incorporate a wide variety of exercise types. These include traditional formats, such as TTXs and FEs, as well as less-scripted policy discussions and other small-scale, short-duration exercises. This flexibility in the design of NEP exercises will enable planners to develop and schedule exercises that best suit the Principal Objectives and general objectives for a given cycle.

The specific number of exercises incorporated for each NEP cycle will depend on the Principal Objectives and general objectives, schedule compatibility, and other factors, such as available resources and budget constraints. NEP exercises will be drawn from both the Federal interagency and non-Federal stakeholders:

5.6.1 *Federal Interagency Exercises:* Exercises will be scheduled through the DRG in coordination with FEMA/NED. Exercises may simulate the actual deliberative bodies that would convene in the event of a real-world incident. Interagency exercises may include exercises of all types.

5.6.2 *Regional, SLTT, NGO, Faith-Based, and Private-Sector Exercises:* Prior to the beginning of each NEP cycle and after the issuance of the Principal Objectives and general objectives, FEMA/NED planners will review the NEXS System to identify prospective exercises among SLTT, private-sector, and other partners suitable for incorporation into the NEP. Working with those partners that volunteer to participate in the NEP, FEMA/NED and the Regions will identify and nominate exercises based on their applicability to the Principal Objectives, regional distribution, timing, and level of complexity. To build national exercise visibility, each FEMA Region will facilitate the entry of SLTT exercises among their constituents into the NEXS.

FEMA/NED and its Federal interagency partners will also identify prospective exercises for inclusion in the NEP through annual Training and Exercise Planning Workshops (TEPWs) and other forums. FEMA/NED and the Regions will coordinate and work in collaboration with each SLTT and other partner representatives selected for participation in the NEP to identify exercise-specific objectives and assist with exercise planning and evaluation.

5.7 *Modeling and Simulation:* The NEP will actively incorporate modeling and simulation technologies and capabilities to increase the accessibility of exercise opportunities, encourage experimentation, and improve the efficiency of NEP planning and exercise conduct.

5.8 *National-Level Exercise:* The biennial capstone exercise will be a national-level exercise that incorporates the elements and progressive lessons of the entire cycle. FEMA/NED will lead the planning and administration of the NEP capstone exercise and the scheduling of planning conferences and build-up activities.

- 5.9 *Progression:* The NEP will employ a progressive model for each cycle. The NEP series of exercises will be designed and conducted with an increasing level of complexity over the course of the cycle. Some exercises may be informal policy discussions to increase participants' familiarity with relevant policies and plans. Over time, as the participants display an increasing mastery of the subject matter, the exercises will increase in size and complexity.
- 5.10 *Exercise Conduct:* All NEP exercises should be conducted in accordance with applicable HSEEP policy. Specific procedures and special considerations for conducting NEP exercises, including the NLE, are detailed in the NEP Implementation Plan.
- 5.11 *Classified Exercises:* Most NEP cycles will include exercises that are either classified or include a classified component. Specific procedures and special considerations for conducting classified exercises are included in the NEP Implementation Plan.
- 5.12 *Evaluation:* The NEP will incorporate a comprehensive and efficient system of exercise evaluation that focuses on the rapid identification, development, and dissemination of lessons learned, as well as the development of corrective actions. FEMA, in coordination with the pertinent Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial department and agency stakeholders, will facilitate the development of an evaluation program tailored to suit the Principal Objectives and general objectives for each two-year cycle and will work with appropriate stakeholders to continually refine the NEP evaluation component to reflect both changes in the objectives and the lessons learned throughout the cycle. A rigorous, effective NEP evaluation methodology will ensure that issues identified during exercises are remediated, participants maximize learning, and the entire Nation benefits from the knowledge and experience gained through these exercises. The specific provisions for the NEP evaluation methodology are detailed in the NEP Implementation Plan.

Key elements of NEP evaluation will include:

- 5.12.1 *Evaluation Team:* To conduct NEP evaluations, FEMA will coordinate the establishment of peer-evaluator teams in coordination with Federal departments and agencies and in consultation with SLTT governments, composed of SMEs and analysts drawn from a wide range of disciplines and from across the Federal interagency and the homeland security enterprise. These SMEs will have experience and expertise that is pertinent to the Principal Objectives and general objectives for the two-year cycle.
- 5.12.2 *Evaluation Conduct:* NEP exercise evaluation will maximize the real-time collection of exercise issues and observations. The focus will be on rapidly developing and disseminating corrective actions and lessons learned following each exercise.

- 5.12.3 *NEP Rolling Summary Report*: Issues, trends, and key lessons learned will continuously be captured in a summary report that can provide senior U.S. Government (USG) leadership with a near real-time snapshot of NEP evaluation at any point in the two-year cycle. This NEP Rolling Summary Report will also enable NEP planners to refine and improve exercise planning in a continuous fashion to reflect lessons learned during the cycle.
- 5.12.4 *Performance Measures and Metrics*: FEMA, in coordination with the Homeland Security Enterprise stakeholders, will develop a series of performance measures and metrics for each two-year cycle that will provide an assessment of how exercises are improving national preparedness. These measures will be tailored for each set of Principal Objectives and general objectives and will help ensure consistency in performance evaluation across a given two-year cycle. These metrics will also support longer-term trend analysis over the life of the NEP.

## **6. Contact Information**

All inquiries regarding the NEP or requests for modifications to this document should be directed to the following:

Director, National Exercise Division  
National Preparedness Directorate  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, DC 20472

(202) 212-4800  
[NEP@dhs.gov](mailto:NEP@dhs.gov)

## **7. Acronyms and Abbreviations**

AAR	After Action Report
APHS-CT	Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism
CAP	Corrective Action Program
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DRG	Domestic Resilience Group
E&E sub-IPC	Exercise and Evaluation sub-Interagency Policy Committee
EIC	Exercise Implementation Committee
FE	Functional Exercise
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FSE	Full-Scale Exercise
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
HSC	Homeland Security Council
IP	Improvement Plan
LLIS	Lessons Learned Information Sharing
NAC	National Advisory Council
NCD	National Council on Disability
NED	National Exercise Division
NEP	National Exercise Program
NEXS	National Exercise Schedule
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLE	National-Level Exercise
NPAD	National Preparedness Assessments Division
NSS	National Security Staff
PC	Principals Committee
POC	Point of Contact
SLTT	State, Local, Tribal, Territorial
SME	Subject Matter Expert
TEPW	Training and Exercise Planning Workshop
TTX	Tabletop Exercise
U.S.C.	United States Code
USG	U.S. Government
WMD	Weapon of Mass Destruction