



Examine the ability of departments and agencies to identify and validate appropriate authorities and roles, lead federal agency responsibilities, incident management resources, and organizational and operational structures to prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents where there is no clear lead federal agency identified in statute or regulation.

The National Exercise Program (NEP) is a two-year cycle of select exercises across the nation that examines and validates capabilities in all preparedness mission areas. The 2017-2018 NEP is guided by seven Principals' Objectives, established by the Principals Committee of the National Security Council and informed by data through the National Preparedness System.

What is a Lead Federal Agency?

The lead federal agency is the **coordinating agency for federal response to an emergency or incident**. The senior response official of the lead federal agency will develop strategic objectives, priorities, and planning efforts necessary for the Federal Government to respond to an incident.

Extensive federal interagency coordination in support of state and local response efforts is often necessary to effectively respond to and recover from major incidents. Past incidents that required this coordination include the 2016 Zika outbreak; the 2015 Flint, Michigan water crisis; the 2014 Ebola virus threat; national droughts; and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. These complex incidents took place over **extended periods of time** and often across **large geographic areas**. These events can cause **uncertainty regarding the role of existing coordination structures and authorities for multi-agency activity**.

RELATED CORE CAPABILITIES

- **Operational Coordination**
- **Environmental Response/Health and Safety**
- **Planning**
- **Critical Transportation**
- **Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services**
- **Infrastructure Systems**

Why is this important?

States and territories provide annual data on their proficiency across 32 core capabilities through the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and State Preparedness Report (SPR). FEMA reports the results of the capability assessments annually in the National Preparedness Report (NPR) to provide a comprehensive analysis of preparedness, including a shared national picture of training and exercise needs relative to capability gaps. Analytic results help shape training and exercise prioritization decisions at all levels.

National Preparedness Report

The 2017 NPR reported that responders have **difficulty establishing unified command when responding to disasters and coordinating an effective interagency response**. The report highlighted a need for further training using the Incident Command System.

The 2015-2016 NEP cycle revealed a **need for additional exercises that validate the ability of whole community partners to coordinate** when there is no clear lead federal agency.



Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

According to 2015 THIRA data, states identified common non-Stafford incidents, including cyber attacks, pandemic incidents, explosive devices, and chemical hazmat release, among the top ten most frequently cited hazards.

State Preparedness Report

According to 2015 SPR data, states and territories most frequently reported Environmental Response/Health and Safety exercise gaps in decontamination and responder safety.





What are the major challenges?

An analysis of 21 real-world and exercise after-action reports (AARs) revealed common challenges:

- Confirming logistical support for niche operations, including responder mental counseling and understanding the availability and need for specialized resources (e.g. air support, hazardous materials, geographic information systems)
- Developing a uniform multi-jurisdictional system coordinating triage, patient tracking, and fatality management among state, local, tribal, and territorial components that includes the nonmedical community
- Ensuring emergency alert planning and protocols have been updated, including an official misinformation countering plan or unit, communication capabilities for different languages, and statewide unified call centers
- Clarifying an operational lead during disasters requiring multiple operations centers and increasing organizational awareness of response efforts from different stakeholders
- Including relevant scientific organizations and subject-matter experts in pre-incident response planning for biological incidents



Distribution of jurisdictions that submitted AARs for exercises that tested lead federal agency coordination capabilities

Note: Multiple exercises may have been conducted within the same location

What can I do?

Training and exercises can help all levels of government, the private and nonprofit sectors, and other partners across the whole community be better prepared. The National Exercise Division at FEMA is committed to providing assistance to partners in planning, designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating their own exercises that validate core capabilities.

Exercise Starter Kits

Exercise Starter Kits are pre-packaged sets of guides and templates to help exercise planners develop tabletop exercises that can be tailored to the specific threats, resources, and operational plans of their community. Each Exercise Starter Kit:

- Includes ready-to-use materials and templates for developing, conducting, and evaluating an exercise
- Incorporates sample scenarios and discussion questions reviewed by experts
- Is flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of individual jurisdictions

Access the Exercise Starter Kits now at <https://pretoolkit.fema.gov/>

Training

Examples of relevant training courses are provided below. Course offerings frequently change; please visit www.firstrespondertraining.gov for a full list of training courses and additional resources.

- AWR-147:** Rail Car Incident Response
- E0431:** Understanding the Emergency Management Assistance Compact
- IS-700.a:** NIMS - An Introduction
- IS-706:** NIMS Intrastate Mutual Aid - An Introduction
- MGT-346:** EOC Operations and Planning for All Hazards
- PER-327:** Crude by Rail Emergency Reponse
- IS-907:** Active Shooter: What You Can Do
- IS-703.a:** NIMS Resource Management

FEMA training courses are provided at no cost to first responders.

National Exercise Program Nominations

Benefits of participating in the NEP include:

- Receiving technical assistance and support for your exercises from experienced exercise specialists
- Access to exercise templates, tools, and other resources to help you design, conduct, and evaluate your exercises
- The ability to pursue new exercise ideas and broaden the impact of your exercises to a wider group of stakeholders
- The opportunity to influence national preparedness policy and resource allocation decisions at all levels by contributing exercise findings

How to Participate in the NEP

1. Visit www.fema.gov/nep to learn more about the 2017-2018 cycle
2. Download and complete the Exercise Nomination Form
3. Work with your FEMA Regional Exercise Officer and submit the Exercise Nomination Form to nep@fema.dhs.gov
4. The FEMA National Exercise Division will respond to discuss your exercise