



**Examine the ability of federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial jurisdictions to implement coordinated, integrated response structures and strategies; detect and categorize disease threats; address domestic and international public health implications; control and contain disease outbreaks; deliver public health and medical services; and communicate with external partners and the public during infectious disease pandemics and biological incidents.**

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 are Infectious Diseases and Biological Incidents?

Infectious diseases are caused by **pathogenic microorganisms**, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another. Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases of animals that can cause disease when transmitted to humans. A **pandemic** is an **international disease outbreak**. A disease becomes **epidemic** when the number of reported cases **increases above its normal prevalence**, which is sometimes zero, and **becomes pandemic when it spreads across national boundaries**. Recent pandemics have included the 2016 Zika pandemic, the 2014-15 Ebola Virus pandemic, and the 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic.

A biological incident includes **naturally occurring biological diseases** (communicable and noncommunicable) in humans as well as **terrorist events**. This includes those biological agents found in the environment, or diagnosed in animals, that have the **potential for transmission to humans**.

The key elements of an effective biological response include, but are not limited to:

- Rapid detection of an outbreak or introduction of a biological agent into the environment
- Rapid dissemination of key safety information, protective equipment, and necessary medical precautions
- Determination of how the agent is transmitted, including an assessment of the efficiency of transmission
- Identification of law enforcement implications/assessment of the threat

### RELATED CORE CAPABILITIES

- Operational Coordination
- Operational Communications
- Situational Assessment
- Environmental Response/Health and Safety
- Mass Care Services
- Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services
- Planning
- Public Information and Warning

### 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.



#### Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

According to 2015 THIRA data, pandemic was the second most frequently cited threat or hazard. **63% of states and territories included human pandemics or biological attacks** as a threat or hazard of primary concern.

#### National Preparedness Report

The 2017 NPR reported that in 2016, **response and recovery** during the Zika virus outbreak **highlighted progress among federal agencies** in improving their coordination for incidents that do not receive a presidential disaster declaration.

2015-2016 NEP cycle exercises revealed whole community response challenges, including:

- Confusion over roles and responsibilities
- Insufficient access to resources
- Uncoordinated public messaging efforts

#### State Preparedness Report

2015 SPR data found the **Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services** core capability experienced one of the **largest one-year declines** in self assessments. 89% of states and territories identified the same core capability as a **“high priority”** and 70% identified a medical surge as a gap in preparedness.

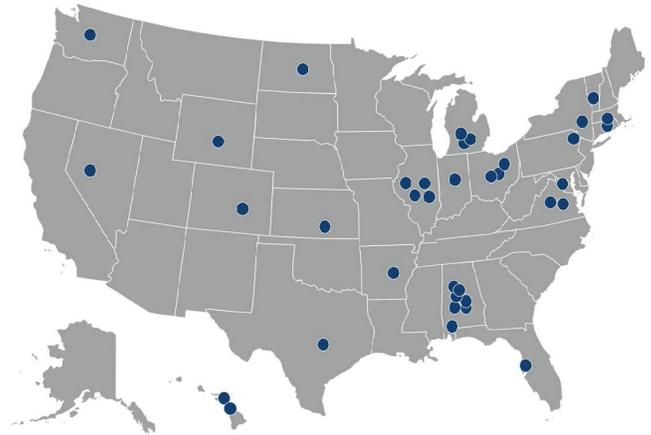




## What are the major challenges?

An analysis of 37 real-world and exercise after-action reports (AARs) revealed common challenges:

- Planning for timely distribution of vaccines and showing how they will be allocated among multiple sites
- Ensuring responders attend refresher training sessions on mass casualty incidents
- Developing and implementing a continuity plan to specifically address staffing shortages
- Ensuring that all requirements for storage supplies are known and shared with staging sites in advance
- Coordinating with federal, state, and local agencies to ensure that timely information regarding medical countermeasures is released, and incorporating medical control work groups into response plans that address public information
- Integrating exercise objectives that focus on prioritizing and providing like resources across multiple incident sites
- Identifying and training dedicated Public Information Officers on mass care incidents, and providing additional training opportunities to assist with public information and monitoring social media sites



*Distribution of jurisdictions that submitted AARs for exercises that tested infectious disease and biological incident capabilities*

## 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://preptoolkit.fema.gov/>

### Training Courses

Examples of relevant training courses are provided below. Course offerings frequently change; please visit [www.firstrespondertraining.gov](http://www.firstrespondertraining.gov) for a full list of training courses and additional resources.

- IS-520:** Introduction to Continuity of Operations Planning for Pandemic Influenzas
- IS-522:** Exercising Continuity Plans for Pandemics
- PER-220:** Emergency Response to Domestic Biological Incidents
- PER-902:** Hospital Emergency Response Training for Mass Casualty Incidents
- AWR-118:** Biological Incidents Awareness
- AWR-118:** Rural Isolation and Quarantine for Public Health and Healthcare Professionals

*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](http://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](mailto:nep@fema.dhs.gov)
4. The FEMA National Exercise Division will respond to discuss your exercise