National Level Exercise (NLE) 2018 brought together more than 12,000 individuals across the whole community to examine the ability of all levels of government, private industry, and nongovernmental organizations to protect against, respond to, and recover from a major Mid-Atlantic hurricane. Additionally, more than 450,000 individuals participated in personal preparedness activities and accountability drills as part of the exercise.

Over the first two weeks of May, NLE 2018 provided a unique chance to examine lessons from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria last fall to improve operations and coordination across all levels of government, the private sector, and the public in advance of the 2018 hurricane season.

The exercise scenario involved a major hurricane that made landfall near Hampton Roads, Virginia, causing severe damage to residences, businesses, and critical infrastructure throughout the Mid-Atlantic. Fictional Hurricane Cora included power outages and cascading effects, with impacts to communications, transportation, water, and public works.

NATIONAL LEVEL OBJECTIVES

01 PRE-LANDFALL PROTECTIVE ACTIONS
02 SUSTAINED RESPONSE IN PARALLEL WITH RECOVERY PLANNING
03 CONTINUITY IN A NATURAL DISASTER
04 POWER OUTAGES AND CRITICAL INTER DEPENDENCIES

NLE 2018 was a true example of federally supported, state managed, and locally executed disaster preparedness, response, and recovery operations.

Federally Supported: Senior leaders from the White House and Cabinet Secretaries actively participated, in addition to more than 91 Federal departments and agencies.

State Managed: The District of Columbia and all states in FEMA Region III—Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia—were critical exercise partners and participants.

Locally Executed: Local participation enhanced the exercise experience as 67 local jurisdictions joined exercise play, tested emergency operations centers, and shared preparedness messages with their communities.

Private Sector Engaged: More than 160 private sector organizations engaged with the FEMA National Business Emergency Operations Center (NBEOC) to discuss how the public and private sectors can better coordinate during disasters.
ROBUST STATE AND LOCAL PARTICIPATION

NLE 2018 included participation from all five states in FEMA Region III, 67 local jurisdictions, and the District of Columbia. Several states hosted exercises to examine evacuation decision-making and pre-landfall protective actions, and governors hosted real-world media events to discuss and promote NLE 2018. FEMA’s Region III Administrator hosted multiple calls with state emergency management directors and other state and local officials to coordinate unified Federal support to state and local partners. Additionally, Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve components conducted functional and field training events to hone their processes and procedures to provide Defense Support of Civil Authorities. This exercise play provided an opportunity for military and civilian agencies at all levels to coordinate response activities.

LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

NLE 2018 included participation from mayors, governors, and senior Federal officials, including the Secretary of Homeland Security and FEMA Administrator. The National Security Council Principals Committee conducted a pre-landfall tabletop exercise to coordinate Federal preparedness activities. Senior Federal, state, and local leadership actively participated in directing response activities, conducting synthetic media interviews, and coordinating during interagency and inter-governmental calls. As an outcome of this coordination, FEMA, state, local, and private sector partners implemented risk-based discussion and decision-making improvements.

CONTINUITY IN NATURAL DISASTERS

As part of NLE 2018, participating organizations at all levels of government tested their continuity plans to ensure they could fulfill essential functions and keep the government operating even if their headquarters buildings were damaged or unavailable. Private sector participants also used this opportunity to test their business continuity plans. Government organizations coordinated response and recovery activities from numerous alternate locations throughout the exercise. NLE 2018 provided the opportunity for departments and agencies to validate their ability to meet their essential functions, ensuring that all levels of government are prepared to meet the needs of the American people under any conditions.
PRIVATE SECTOR & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

NLE 2018 included unprecedented levels of engagement across the private and nonprofit sectors, including numerous businesses and nongovernmental organizations spanning 14 sectors. During the exercise, the National Business Emergency Operations Center activated and coordinated with private sector, infrastructure, and voluntary partners to establish response priorities and discuss resource sharing and requirements. These efforts identified numerous lessons to drive improvements in public-private information sharing and coordination for catastrophic incidents. In addition, FEMA hosted a live hurricane preparedness webinar for more than 1,000 registrants at the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) conference.

INNOVATIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

NLE 2018 included a suite of dynamic online tools and resources to visualize ground truth and scenario data. The tools displayed storm impacts, power outages, evacuation routes, and traffic data, enabling players to access realistic data to drive exercise play. The tools also included a situational awareness viewer, enabling players to determine power outages by county and census tract, identify key school, health, transportation, and other critical infrastructure within a selected area, obtain population data, and determine the Social Vulnerability Index information. Exercise controllers also created real-time GIS products to support player requests for new or expanded scenario effects.

SYNTHETIC MEDIA

NLE 2018 featured a comprehensive simulated media environment, including synthetic television, radio, print and social media, and organization websites. News reports, storm advisories, player interviews, GIS modeling, and other scenario elements were revealed to players through the synthetic media platform. The synthetic media platform included news and social media updates which changed based on player actions, interviews, and public affairs activities throughout.

Prince George’s County, Maryland Community Emergency Response Team members conduct search and rescue as part of NLE 2018. [Source: Twitter/Prince George’s County OEM]

Planners leverage day/night band analysis to assess Hurricane Cora’s impact to regional power grid. [Source: FEMA GeoPlatform]

Simulated press conference in Maryland with Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford. [Source: Twitter/MEMA]
There are still ways for individuals, families, and communities to build on National Level Exercise 2018 and get ready for hurricanes:

**GET ALERTS AND WARNINGS**

Receiving timely information about weather conditions or other emergencies can make all the difference in knowing when to take action to be safe. Download the FEMA App at [www.fema.gov/mobile-app](http://www.fema.gov/mobile-app) to learn what to do before, during, and after emergencies, and receive weather alerts from the National Weather Service. The FEMA App is available in English and Spanish.

**CREATE AND TEST A FAMILY COMMUNICATION PLAN**

Your family may not be together when a disaster strikes. Know how you'll contact one another and reconnect if separated. Establish a family meeting place that's familiar and easy to find. Get started on your plan at [www.ready.gov/make-a-plan](http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan).

**DOCUMENT AND INSURE PROPERTY**

When a disaster strikes, having insurance for your home or business property is the best way to ensure you will have the necessary financial resources to help you repair, rebuild, or replace whatever is damaged. Get started with the Document and Insure Your Property guide at [go.usa.gov/xQqqN](http://go.usa.gov/xQqqN). Visit [www.FloodSmart.gov](http://www.FloodSmart.gov) to learn more about purchasing flood insurance and the National Flood Insurance Program.

**STRENGTHEN YOUR FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS**

Taking the time now to collect and secure personal financial, insurance, medical, and other records will give you peace of mind and, in the event of an emergency, will ensure that you have the documentation needed to start the recovery process without delay. Download FEMA's Emergency Financial First Aid Kit at [www.ready.gov/financial-preparedness](http://www.ready.gov/financial-preparedness).

**GET TRAINED**

Every minute is important in a disaster, and if emergency responders are not nearby, you could be the one to help others until help arrives. Visit [www.ready.gov/until-help-arrives](http://www.ready.gov/until-help-arrives) for online training and to find out what your role can be during disasters. You can also contact your local emergency management office to find upcoming training and events in your community.