



Examine the ability of partners across the whole community, including businesses and government at all levels, to execute continuity plans and continue essential functions and services during an incident where key personnel, facilities, or systems are directly threatened or impacted.

The National Exercise Program (NEP) is a two-year cycle of exercises across the nation that examines and validates capabilities in all preparedness mission areas. The 2019-2020 NEP cycle is guided by nine Principals’ Strategic Priorities, established by the National Security Council and informed by national preparedness data.

What are Continuity exercises?

Continuity of operations (COOP) ensures an individual organization can continue to perform its essential functions, provide essential services, and deliver core capabilities during a disruption to normal operations. Today’s threat environment has increased the need for comprehensive continuity plans that enable communities and organizations to continue essential functions and provide critical services across a broad spectrum of emergencies when normal operations are disrupted.

Exercises aligned to this priority should:

- Examine implementation of government or business continuity plans and procedures
- Assess the ability to continue essential functions and services
- Evaluate the operations of key personnel, facilities, or systems during any scenario, threat, or hazard which directly threatens or impacts the continuance of essential functions

Related Core Capabilities

- **Intelligence and Information Sharing**
- **Operational Coordination**
- **Operational Communications**
- **Planning**
- **Public Information and Warning**
- **Risk Management for Protection Programs and Activities**

Why is this important?

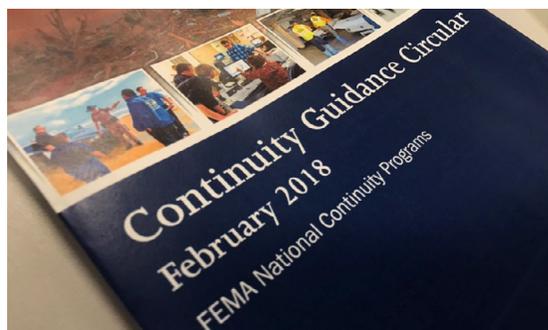
States, territories, tribes, urban areas, and other communities use the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) to assess their preparedness. FEMA includes the results of the THIRA and SPR, along with several other preparedness indicators, in the annual National Preparedness Report (NPR). Analytic results help shape planning, training, exercise, and other prioritization decisions at all levels.

Stakeholder Preparedness Review

- In 2017, 43% of states and territories identified **“continuity planning” as a functional gap** within the Planning core capability. This was the second most commonly identified Planning functional gap
- 63% of states and territories also identified **“continuity of operations for cyber systems” as a functional gap** within the Cybersecurity core capability

Lessons Learned and Emerging Threats

- FEMA’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan highlights the importance of the continued **integration of continuity subject-matter expertise and coordination** into response and recovery operations across the emergency management community
- Exercises revealed numerous gaps, including the **need for additional planning related to continuity of operations**, both in terms of resources and staffing



Spotlight: Continuity Guidance Circular

In March 2018, FEMA National Continuity Programs published the **2018 Continuity Guidance Circular**, which guides whole community efforts to develop and maintain the capability to ensure continuity of operations, continuity of government, and enduring constitutional government during an emergency that disrupts normal operations. Read more at fema.gov/continuity-guidance-circular-cgc.



What are the major challenges?

An analysis of 15 real-world and exercise after-action reports (AARs) revealed common challenges:

- Increasing coordination among Federal, regional, state, local, private-sector, academic, and non-governmental organizations by collaboratively enhancing continuity plans
- Ensuring that information and recommendations delivered to leadership follow a consistent reporting chain, include a clear scope, and demonstrate a transition plan
- Establishing plans for public messaging before, during, and after a catastrophic event to avoid confusion among the media and the general public
- Establishing mutual aid agreements that account for large-scale events that span across a state to address fuel and personnel resources



Distribution of jurisdictions that submitted AARs for exercises aligning to Continuity capabilities

Case Study: Grid Security Exercise

The **2017 Grid Security Exercise** scenario focused on simulated cyber and physical attacks on the electricity sector. The exercise **highlighted the need for operational resilience** and recommended that utilities **develop communications contingency plans** to increase communications resiliency.

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.

Spotlight Initiatives

FEMA National Continuity Programs generated the **Continuity Resource Toolkit** that provides supporting templates and tools to Federal and non-federal organizations for the development and evaluation of continuity programs. Access the toolkit at [fema.gov/continuity-resource-toolkit](https://www.fema.gov/continuity-resource-toolkit).

The **Business Continuity Planning Suite** software consists of a business continuity plan training, automated continuity and disaster recovery plan generators, and a self-directed exercise for testing an implemented plan. Learn more at [ready.gov/business-continuity-planning-suite](https://www.ready.gov/business-continuity-planning-suite).

Related Training Courses

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

- E-550:** Continuity of Operations Planning
- E-557:** Mission Essential Functions Workshop (Continuity Guidance)
- E/G-548:** Continuity of Operations Managers Training Course
- IS-547.a:** Introduction to Continuity of Operations
- IS-551:** Devolution Planning

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

Please visit [preptoolkit.fema.gov](https://www.preptoolkit.fema.gov) for Exercise Starter Kits, training courses, and additional resources.

Nominate an Exercise to the National Exercise Program

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 [fema.gov/nep](https://www.fema.gov/nep) to learn more about the NEP
2. Download and complete the Exercise Nomination Form
3. Submit your completed Exercise Nomination Form to nep@fema.dhs.gov
4. The FEMA National Exercise Division will respond to discuss your exercise