

# 2023 – 2026 Principals’ Exercise Priorities Report

National Exercise Program

June 2023



FEMA

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# Table of Contents

<b>Letter from the Administrator .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2023–2026 Principals’ Exercise Priorities.....	2
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Overview.....	4
1.2. Report Methodology.....	4
<b>2. 2023–2026 Principals’ Exercise Priorities .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1. Climate Resilience and Adaptation .....	9
2.2. Complex Incident Coordination .....	11
2.3. Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity.....	13
2.4. Public Health Emergencies.....	16
2.5. Supply Chain Resilience.....	18
2.6. Recovery .....	20
<b>Appendix A: Data Sources.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix B: Acronyms .....</b>	<b>27</b>

## Letter from the Administrator

I am pleased to present the 2023-2026 Principals’ Exercise Priorities. These Priorities guide the 2023-2026 National Exercise Program cycle and will enable stakeholders to evaluate how effectively they build, sustain and deliver capabilities in support of the National Preparedness Goal. The Principals’ Exercise Priorities are based on preparedness data, lessons from past exercises and real-world incidents, strategy and policy documents, capability assessments from partners across the nation and input from subject-matter experts. The Priorities have gone through extensive stakeholder and leadership review and have been finalized by the Principals’ Committee of the National Security Council.



As the National Exercise Program has evolved to face the tremendous challenges experienced in recent years, the Priorities have similarly evolved to ensure that the National Exercise Program succeeds in its mission to serve our Federal Government and whole community partners. Presented alphabetically, these Priorities address some of the most pressing challenges faced by our nation at this time, and their place within the National Exercise Program ensures that these areas will retain attention and receive investment over the coming National Exercise Program cycle.

**Climate Resilience and Adaptation** will help communities address increasingly frequent climate-related disruptions in their jurisdictions. **Complex Incident Coordination** will allow governments at all levels to test their capabilities in addressing new types of complex incidents. **Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity** focuses exercise activities on the types of cybersecurity incidents that are becoming more frequent nationwide. **Public Health Emergencies** will allow jurisdictions to leverage COVID-19 lessons learned as they continue to strengthen health capabilities. **Supply Chain Resilience** ensures that innovative exercise practices will be applied to evaluating supply chain disruptions. Finally, **Recovery** ensures that jurisdictions will have the exercise resources they need to understand the recovery process throughout the lifecycle of an incident.

We have many opportunities in the coming years to leverage exercises to address the greatest challenges faced by our nation. I am confident that these Priorities will serve as the foundation to increase national preparedness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deanne Criswell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Deanne Criswell  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency

June 2023

## Executive Summary

This report presents the 2023–2026 National Exercise Program (NEP) cycle priorities set by the by the Principals Committee of the National Security Council and approved by the FEMA Administrator. The Principals’ Exercise Priorities (PEPs) are based on preparedness data, lessons from past exercises and real-world incidents, strategy and policy documents, capability assessments from partners across the nation and input from subject-matter experts. This report provides specific alignment requirements for each exercise aligned to each PEP. Each PEP’s title, definition and requirements detail how it should be examined in the 2023–2026 NEP cycle (January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2026). While the PEPs are in effect from 2023-2026, the PEPs may be reviewed periodically for updates and additions.

### 2023–2026 Principals’ Exercise Priorities

Exercises aligned to the 2023–2026 PEPs should enable stakeholders to evaluate how effectively they build, sustain and deliver capabilities required to “prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk,” as described in the National Preparedness Goal.<sup>1</sup> Table 1 presents the proposed PEPs.

**Table 1: Proposed 2023–2026 PEPs**

Title	Definition
<b>Climate Resilience and Adaptation</b>	Strengthen whole community capabilities to anticipate, prepare for and adapt to climate-related disruptions, challenges and risks, including understanding how climate change alters climate-related risks and identifying ways to adjust systems to protect the whole community.
<b>Complex Incident Coordination</b>	Examine the nation’s capabilities to prevent, detect, protect against, respond to, mitigate and/or recover from any natural disaster, act of terrorism or other incident that requires significant incident management coordination to a disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale or government functions in an area or nationwide, including incidents that may not result in a Stafford Act emergency or major disaster declaration.
<b>Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity</b>	Advance cybersecurity preparedness and the response to cyber incidents by focusing on preventing, protecting and responding to incidents on critical infrastructure targets, including disseminating information for action and collaborating with private sector partners and cybersecurity subject-matter experts to increase the security and resilience of critical networks.

<sup>1</sup> National Preparedness Goal: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/goal>.

Title	Definition
<b>Public Health Emergencies</b>	Prepare, mobilize and coordinate a whole community approach to improve the full spectrum of medical and public health capabilities across federal and state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) jurisdictions in the event of a public health emergency, disaster or attack, taking into consideration health inequities (e.g., vulnerable and underserved populations) that occur when public health emergency resources are prioritized and allocated.
<b>Supply Chain Resilience</b>	Enhance supply chain resilience by fostering awareness and collaboration among key supply chain stakeholders and promoting mitigation activities, examining supply chain disruptions and identifying potential impacts to the private sector and whole community to develop effective emergency response plans and operate efficiently, minimizing response and recovery operations.
<b>Recovery</b>	Examine whole community capabilities to accelerate the recovery process through the lifecycle of a disaster by identifying vulnerable population requirements, using risk assessment and mitigation strategies, increasing community resilience and maintaining short- and long-term recovery efforts.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

The PEPs are priorities set by the Principals Committee of the National Security Council that drive each four-year cycle of the NEP. This report proposes the PEPs for the NEP cycle, which starts on January 1, 2023, and concludes on December 31, 2026.

As part of the National Preparedness System, the National Exercise Program (NEP) is a key component in developing a culture of preparedness. Through exercises, officials at all levels of government and members of the whole community examine and assess plans, validate capabilities and identify strengths and areas for improvement.

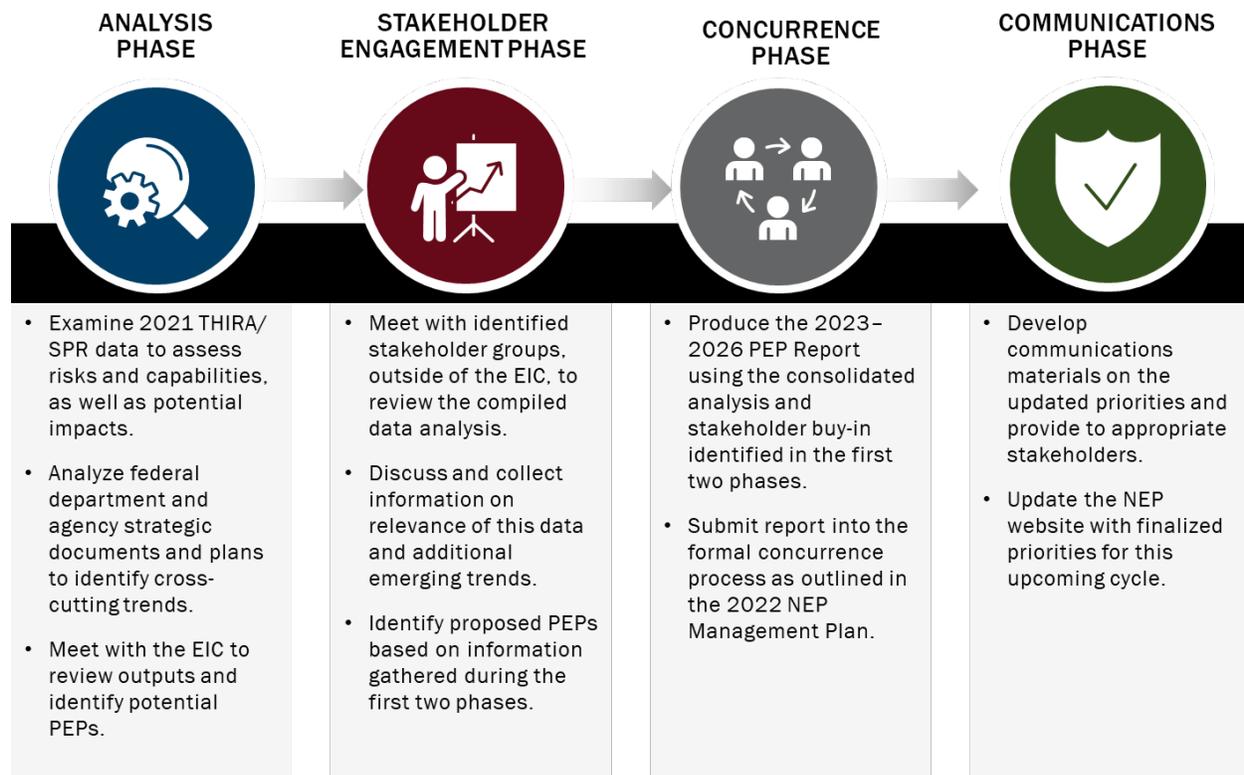
The NEP was established by United States Code (U.S.C.), Title 6, Chapter 2, Subchapter II, Part A, Section 748(b)(1), which directs that

The Administrator [of FEMA], 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, National Response Plan [now the National Response Framework], and other related plans and strategies.

Administered by FEMA's National Exercise Division (NED), the NEP incorporates participants and exercise programs from the whole community, including federal and state, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) governments; the private sector; nonprofit organizations; nongovernmental organizations; faith-based partners; and individuals. Evaluation of NEP exercises provides data for the National Preparedness System through the National Preparedness Report (NPR) to provide a clearer picture of the nation’s readiness.

## 1.2. Report Methodology

Developing the 2023–2026 PEPs involves multiple steps (Figure 1) based on Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment/Stakeholder Preparedness Review (THIRA/SPR) outputs; a trend analysis on current federal strategic documents; and Exercise Implementation Committee (EIC) engagement. Over the course of four phases (Analysis, Stakeholder Engagement, Concurrence, Communications), the PEPs are refined through in-depth analysis and review by subject-matter experts (SMEs). Ultimately, the Principals Committee concurs on the PEPs and the FEMA Administrator approves them.



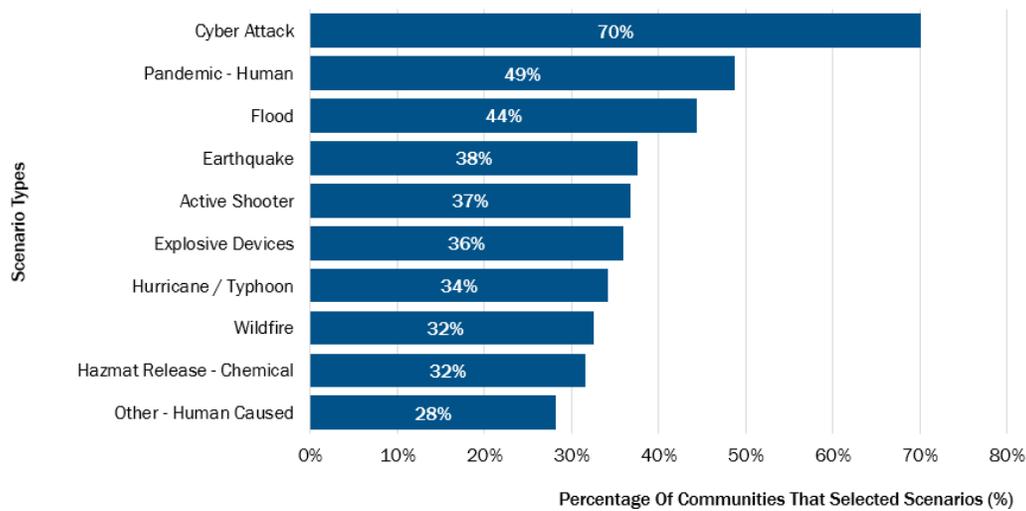
**Figure 1: PEP Methodology**

### 1.2.1. THIRA/SPR ANALYSIS

The THIRA is a three-step risk assessment completed by states, territories and tribes every three years. It helps communities understand their risks and determine actions to address those risks.<sup>2</sup> The outputs from this process lay the foundation for determining a community’s capability gaps as part of the SPR. To develop the 2023–2026 PEPs, NEP analysts examined THIRA/SPR data in several ways and used the resulting information to identify the PEPs and develop specific alignment requirements for each.

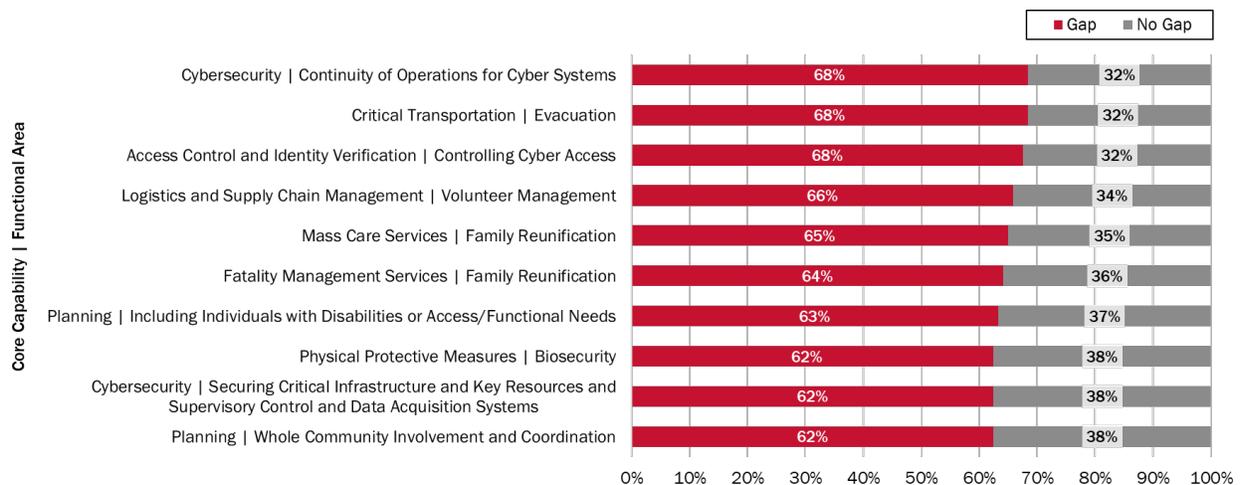
First, data from community THIRA/SPRs provided a baseline for threats and hazards the NEP should consider during PEP development (Figure 2). This data demonstrated that cyberattacks remain a priority concern for most jurisdictions nationwide.

<sup>2</sup> [Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Guide Comprehensive Preparedness Guide \(CPG\) 201 Supplement 1: Toolkit.](#)



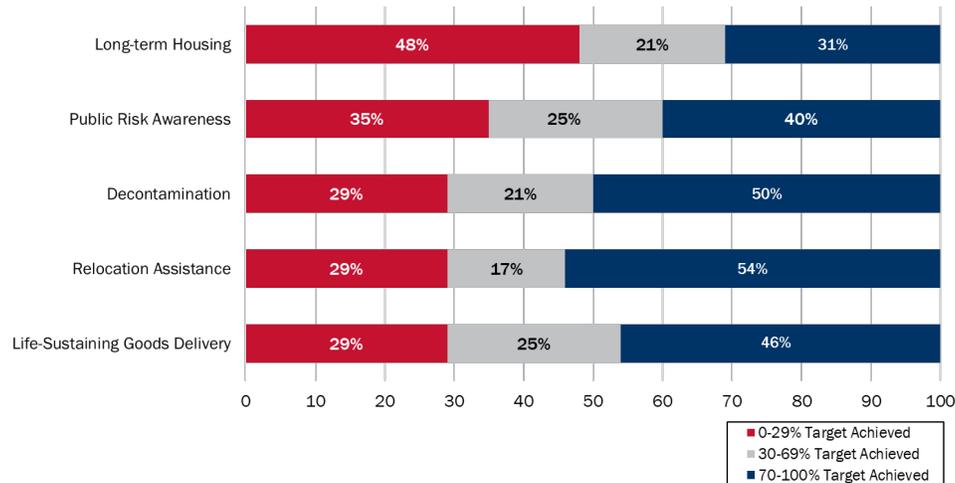
**Figure 2: 2021 THIRA/SPR top scenarios. The 10 most frequently chosen scenarios are portrayed in this figure and identified using the THIRA/SPR Dashboard, Threats and Hazards Data Dashboard.**

Next, analysts considered core capability functional areas with the highest exercise gaps (Figure 3). The data shows that 68% of communities report exercise gaps for the continuity of operations for cyber systems functional area, aligned to the Cybersecurity core capability; for the evacuation functional area, aligned to the Critical Transportation core capability; and for the controlling cyber access functional area, aligned to the Access Control and Identity Verification core capability. This exercise gap data helped the NEP identify capabilities for the PEPs to address in this cycle.



**Figure 3: Functional areas with the highest exercise gaps. The 10 functional areas with the highest exercise gaps were identified by filtering for the Exercise POETE element in the Functional Area Gap Overview on the THIRA/SPR Dashboard, Other Areas Dashboard.**

Finally, analysts examined the percentage of communities reporting that they can achieve high -priority capability targets. Figure 4 identifies the high-priority capability targets with the lowest community achievement. The Long-Term Housing capability shows the greatest number of communities reporting low achievement, with 48% of communities identifying that only 0–29% of their Long-Term Housing target is achieved. This analysis helped the NEP identify exercise capability targets with low achievement for the PEPs to address in this cycle.



**Figure 4: Exercise priority capability targets with the most jurisdictions reporting low achievement. The five high exercise priority capability targets with the lowest achievement were identified using the THIRA/SPR Dashboard, Overview Dashboard. Capability targets were filtered by Exercise POETE element, then filtered by High Priority.**

### 1.2.2. STRATEGIC DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

#### INTEGRATED PREPAREDNESS PLAN PHRASE ANALYSIS

Jurisdictions and organizations develop an Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP), formerly known as the Training and Exercise Plan (TEP) or Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan (MYTEP), to combine efforts across the elements of the preparedness cycle to confirm that they have the capabilities to handle threats and hazards. This report examined 25 IPPs for similar terms and common phrases related to exercise priorities. Figure 5 identifies the most common four-, three- and two-word phrases across these IPPs. Like the THIRA/SPR analysis, this phrase analysis helps the NEP align priorities to areas of interest to jurisdictions nationwide.

Four Words		Three Words		Two Words	
logistics supply chain management	6	public information warning	11	operational coordination	25
public health healthcare medical	5	planning training exercise	11	training exercise	18
health healthcare medical services	5	public health healthcare	9	public health	16
environmental response health safety	4	supply chain management	7	core capabilities	15

**Figure 5: Top phrases from SLTT Integrated Preparedness Plans (IPPs). 25 IPPs were run through a text-mining algorithm, which grouped data into four-word, three-word, and two-word phrases and reported the frequency of each phrase.**

## FEDERAL STRATEGIC DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

This report examined 29 federal documents published between 2021 and 2022 to identify common themes across federal departments and agencies. These documents included department and agency strategic plans, White House Executive Orders (EOs), and other federal guidance material. The resulting cross-cutting theme areas informed the initial list of proposed PEPs. Appendix A lists the federal documents that the analysis examined.

### 1.2.3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CONCURRENCE

The data collected during the Analysis Phase was examined and discussed through multiple rounds of engagement with the Exercise Implementation Committee (EIC) and relevant SMEs. Through these engagements, stakeholders developed the draft PEPs, including their titles, definitions, and associated exercise objectives. Following these discussions, FEMA NED drafted this PEP Report.

This PEP Report has gone through multiple rounds of review and concurrence with exercise and programmatic SMEs within FEMA and across the federal interagency. The Principals Committee of the National Security Council provided final concurrence on this report, which is finalized with the signature by the FEMA Administrator.

Additional details about this process can be found in the National Exercise Program Management Plan.

## 2. 2023–2026 Principals’ Exercise Priorities

### 2.1. Climate Resilience and Adaptation

Strengthen whole community capabilities to anticipate, prepare for and adapt to climate-related disruptions, challenges and risks, including understanding how climate change alters climate-related risks and identifying ways to adjust systems to protect the whole community.

#### 2.1.1. WHY IS THIS PEP IMPORTANT?

Communities nationwide are feeling the impacts of climate change, which is increasingly challenging the nation’s resilience. The increase in frequent and extreme weather driven by climate change can cause loss of life, damage infrastructure and devastate a community’s economic, social and environmental well-being. Climate change impacts are not distributed equally, and vulnerable populations, including lower-income and underserved communities, are less able to prepare for and cope with extreme weather and climate-related incidents. In the face of these challenges, exercises provide a forum for whole community participants to better understand climate change and plan for, adapt to, respond to, and mitigate climate change risks and hazards. The Climate Resilience and Adaptation PEP gives the whole community an effective way to increase understanding of climate-related impacts and update plans, preparedness actions and mitigation and recovery strategies.

Every four years, the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) delivers the National Climate Assessment Report<sup>3</sup> to Congress and the President. This report evaluates and interprets climate-related findings, analyzes the effects of global change on critical resources and examines both human-induced and natural trends in global change. The most recent report identified the following current and future climate change risks based on community exposure to physical climate impacts and the factors that influence response capabilities:

- **Economy and Infrastructure:** Without more significant global greenhouse gas mitigation and regional adaptation efforts, climate change is expected to cause substantial losses to infrastructure and property, impeding the rate of economic growth over this century. Climate change is expected to increasingly affect trade, including import and export prices and U.S. businesses with overseas operations and supply chains.
- **Natural Environment and Ecosystem Services:** Climate change threatens many benefits that the natural environment provides to society, including safe and reliable water supplies, clean air, protection from flooding and erosion and the use of natural resources for economic, recreational and subsistence activities.
- **Human Health and Well-Being:** Higher temperatures, increasing air quality risks, more frequent and intense extreme weather and climate-related incidents, increases in coastal flooding,

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<sup>3</sup>[USGCRP National Climate Assessment Report.](#)

disruption of ecosystem services and other changes increasingly threaten the health and well-being of the American people, particularly populations that are already vulnerable.

### 2.1.2. PEP ALIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Exercises aligned to the Climate Resilience and Adaptation PEP can examine a wide variety of issues, including protecting vulnerable coastal populations and ecosystems, building resilient water infrastructure and managing flood and fire risk, among many others. Chronic or regional climate changes in the U.S. and elsewhere could also affect the distribution, emergence, and re-emergence of disease, highlighting the intersection of this PEP with elements of the Public Health Emergencies PEP. Although Climate Resilience and Adaptation PEP exercises might examine the response to a weather event, examining the response phase alone is not sufficient to meet the requirements of this PEP. Exercises must discuss or otherwise examine climate resilience and/or adaptation, as detailed below.

Exercises aligned to the Climate Change PEP must examine **at least two** of the following objectives:

- Discuss roles and responsibilities for requesting resources for climate adaptation, including understanding processes and statutory authorities within the federal and state climate adaptation and resilience plans.
- Validate processes that improve long-term climate resilience of emergency managers, senior officials and SLTT and whole community partners through a shared understanding of climate risks and impactful opportunities to adapt to the changing environment.
- Identify methods to strengthen existing processes, practices and structures to address future climate impacts as part of climate adaptation for the whole community.
- Identify improvements in existing processes, practices and structures to prepare to future climate impacts for vulnerable communities with limited capacity to adapt to and cope with extreme weather and climate-related threats.
- Discuss the ability to provide actionable climate information and tools to decision makers.

Other exercises that align to this PEP include:

- Exercises examining plans funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Program Office’s grant program, especially if those exercises examine the objectives listed above.
- Exercises examining federal climate adaptation plans required by the Council on Environmental Quality.
- Exercises examining any national climate strategy finalized during the 2023–2026 NEP cycle.

## 2.2. Complex Incident Coordination

Examine the nation’s capabilities to prevent, detect, protect against, respond to, mitigate and/or recover from any natural disaster, act of terrorism or other incident that requires significant incident management coordination to a disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale or government functions in an area or nationwide, including incidents that may not result in a Stafford Act emergency or major disaster declaration.

### 2.2.1. WHY IS THIS PEP IMPORTANT?

Communities nationwide are consistently required to respond to events of increasing magnitude and complexity. Additionally, the federal government must constantly prepare for and respond to emerging threats that draw on federal resources. Although the 2019 National Response Framework describes ways to “improve coordination and response structures to build preparedness for catastrophic incidents,” emerging threats affecting incident response mean that communities cannot meet these challenges solely by scaling up existing plans and capabilities.<sup>4</sup> Rather, new mechanisms are needed to supplement those already in place and facilitate cross-sector coordination, while respecting the roles of private sector partners and authorities of agencies at all levels of government.

The Complex Incident Coordination PEP examines emerging threats and existing coordination mechanisms in novel situations. Whole community partners have an opportunity to consider the landscape of requirements, examine resource prioritization capabilities and discuss the stabilization of their communities in the absence of traditional resources from the federal government. Federal partners have an opportunity to examine new coordination mechanisms and respond to an incident in the absence of resources.

### 2.2.2. PEP ALIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Exercises aligned to the Complex Incident Coordination PEP should consider scenarios that challenge traditional response operations, whether testing existing plans, policies and procedures in a new threat environment or testing the ability to respond without typical resources because of concurrent events. These exercises could examine either Stafford or non-Stafford Act events.

Exercises aligned to the Complex Incident Coordination PEP must examine **at least one** of the following objectives:

- Discuss capabilities needed to sustain an active and prolonged continuity posture beyond established planning timelines to identify new areas of risk associated with those capabilities, interagency coordination, and resource sharing that support the co-delivery of essential functions and services.
- Identify resource shortfalls and cascading effects to whole community.

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<sup>4</sup> [2019 FEMA National Response Framework \(Fourth Edition\)](#)

- Assess the extent to which essential functions and services are sufficiently distributed, hardened, or otherwise resilient to catastrophic incidents regardless of warning.
- Demonstrate the ability of decision-makers to consider impacts and prioritize restoration of critical infrastructure in resource-constrained environments.
- Identify and/or discuss limits to statutory authorities when responding to an incident.
- Validate executive branch leadership procedures and capabilities that enable the no-notice transfer of authority, without relocating personnel, to continuously direct the performance of essential functions and services under all conditions.
- Discuss the cascading impacts to reaching equitable outcomes for the whole community, such as impacts to underserved communities, including persons that are American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino; or people from other racial and ethnic minority groups; lower income residents; people with access and functional needs; and people that have experienced homelessness or incarceration.

Other exercises that align to this PEP include:

- Exercises that are federal, multi-state, and/or multi-region in scope and examine any federal policy, plans or directives related to national security emergencies<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Executive Order 12656 defines a national security emergency as “any occurrence, including natural disaster, military attack, technological emergency, or other emergency, that seriously degrades or seriously threatens the national security of the United States.”

## 2.3. Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity

Advance cybersecurity preparedness and the response to cyber incidents by focusing on preventing, protecting and responding to incidents on critical infrastructure targets, including disseminating information for action and collaborating with private sector partners and cybersecurity subject-matter experts to increase the security and resilience of critical networks.

### 2.3.1. WHY IS THIS PEP IMPORTANT?

As stated in EO 14028: Improving the Nation’s Cybersecurity,<sup>6</sup> the United States faces “persistent and increasingly sophisticated malicious cyber campaigns that threaten the public sector, the private sector, and ultimately the American people’s security and privacy.” This problem “compounds exponentially as computers have been networked together into the vast and increasingly complex digital systems that define our modern lives, economies, and societies.”<sup>7</sup> Cybersecurity threats exploit the increased connectivity of critical infrastructure systems and place the nation’s economy, public safety and health at risk. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) leads the nation’s work in strengthening cybersecurity and provides background information, mitigation activities and exercise design resources related to cyber and physical threats.

Out of the 29 department and agency strategic documents analyzed in the PEP Report trend analysis (Section 1.2.2), over 15 federal strategic plans identified insufficient cybersecurity as a key threat the nation faces. Additionally, a 2021 THIRA/SPR analysis (Section 1.2.1) shows that 70% of stakeholders and SMEs chose a cyber attack as the most likely threat or hazard scenario that could affect their communities. The Continuity of Cyber Systems and Controlling Cyber Access functional areas are also identified as having high exercise gaps by 68% of communities.

Increasing technological interconnectedness, as well as the shift to virtual work, school and medicine due to COVID-19, has caused “greater threats to the nation’s critical infrastructure by bad actors and foreign cyber espionage campaigns.”<sup>8</sup> The Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity PEP allows federal and SLTT partners to examine their cyber response capabilities and acquire NEP funding to address gaps in their plans, policies or procedures.

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<sup>6</sup> [EO 14028: Improving the Nation’s Cybersecurity, May 12, 2021.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [A Strategic Intent Statement for the Office of the National Cyber Director.](#)

<sup>8</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, [Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community \[February 2022\].](#)

CISA's online Cybersecurity Training and Exercises<sup>9</sup> hub provides a multitude of preparedness resources for federal employees, critical infrastructure operators, cybersecurity professionals (non-federal) and the general public. These resources include, but are not limited to:

- A free, online, on-demand cybersecurity training system, the Federal Virtual Training Environment (FedVTE).
- A CISA Tabletop Exercise Package (CTEP) to help critical infrastructure owners and operators develop their own exercises to meet facility and stakeholder needs.
- Certification prep courses on topics such as 101 Coding, Cyber Supply Chain Risk Management, Cyber Essentials and Foundations for Cybersecurity Managers.
- A no-cost Incident Response Training curriculum for beginners and intermediate cyber professionals on basic cybersecurity awareness and best practices.

### 2.3.2. PEP ALIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Exercises aligned to the Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity PEP must meet the following requirements:

- Include a mix of mission owners and SMEs, not just cybersecurity elements or mission owners.
- Involve impacts to one or more Critical Infrastructure Sectors.<sup>10</sup>

Exercises aligned to the Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity PEP must examine **at least two** of the following objectives:

- Identify roles and responsibilities between organizations and sector risk management agencies<sup>11</sup> under the cyber response framework.
- Discuss the effect of relevant authorities on the potential cascading impacts to cyber response operations.
- Discuss the ability to share actionable information, including response to classified information, in a timely manner with appropriate private sector and government partners on vulnerability and threat data.

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<sup>9</sup> [CISA](#) enables the cyber-ready workforce of tomorrow by training and educating the cybersecurity workforce by providing training for federal employees, private-sector cybersecurity professionals, critical infrastructure operators, educational partners and the general public.

<sup>10</sup> There are 16 critical infrastructure sectors whose “assets, systems, and networks, whether physical or virtual, are considered so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination thereof.” Information on the critical infrastructure sectors is available at [Critical Infrastructure Sectors | CISA](#).

<sup>11</sup> Each of the 16 critical infrastructure sectors has a designated [Sector Risk Management Agency](#) (SRMA), as identified in Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21): Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience.

- Discuss the ability to escalate to internal authorities using the organization’s cyber plans, policies or procedures.
- Discuss how to successfully achieve required reporting following a cybersecurity incident.
- Identify methods to bring together and test partners (e.g., security, IT, continuity, cyber, enterprise risk management, human resources, public affairs, mission owners) with multiple roles.

Other exercises that align to this PEP include:

- Any exercise that is federal, multi-state and/or multi-region in scope and examines updates to the National Cyber Incident Response Plan (NCIRP).
- Exercises that examine the Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act of 2022 (CIRCIA).

## 2.4. Public Health Emergencies

Prepare, mobilize and coordinate a whole community approach to improve the full spectrum of medical and public health capabilities across federal and SLTT jurisdictions in the event of a public health emergency, disaster, or attack; taking into consideration health inequities (e.g., vulnerable and underserved populations) that occur when public health emergency resources are prioritized and allocated.

### 2.4.1. WHY IS THIS PEP IMPORTANT?

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a real-world examination of the nation’s capabilities to manage a public health emergency. While the most severe health impacts of COVID-19 are decreasing due to increased vaccination coverage and natural immunity, our nation continues to be affected by the implications of this pandemic. The economic fallout from the pandemic continues to challenge state and local governments, particularly in low-income jurisdictions. This pandemic significantly disrupted essential health services (e.g., increase in healthcare worker shortages, delays in non-emergency procedures, avoidance of healthcare facilities because of fears of becoming infected with COVID-19), which are likely to worsen overall health outcomes.

The 2021 THIRA/SPR showed that over 49% of communities chose a human pandemic as a threat or hazard of concern, the second-highest identified threat or hazard across all jurisdictions (Figure 2). To enhance our nation’s biodefense and pandemic readiness, the National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan<sup>12</sup> suggests that whole community partners continue strengthening their capabilities, including “improvements to data tracking systems; expansion of the public healthcare workforce; increasing investments into research, development, and manufacturing of countermeasures; and strengthening public healthcare partnerships.” For the 2023–2026 NEP cycle, it is vital that communities continue to examine and validate public health emergency capabilities.

In coordination with interagency partners, FEMA developed seven COVID-19 Resource Roadmaps<sup>13</sup> to help communities navigate COVID-19 pandemic recovery. Each roadmap identifies potential solutions and describes how federal funding and technical assistance can help communities with pandemic recovery, including but not limited to economic recovery, healthcare funding, housing resources and educational resources.

### 2.4.2. PEP ALIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Although not a strict requirement, exercises aligned to the Public Health Emergencies PEP should explicitly draw on lessons learned from the COVID-19 public health emergency as much as possible.

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<sup>12</sup> [National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan](#).

<sup>13</sup> [FEMA COVID-19 Resource Roadmaps](#).

Exercises aligned to the Health Emergencies PEP must examine **at least two** of the following objectives:

- Validate the ability to surge laboratory infrastructure and capacity, including the process to use existing laboratory capacity in other locations or the ability to add additional laboratory capacity.
- Identify conditions where laboratory surge capacity is necessary and validate processes to begin surging laboratory capacity.
- Based on COVID-19 lessons learned, develop or demonstrate the ability to deploy public messaging, including messaging that addresses disinformation and malinformation and that incorporates disease containment strategies (e.g., isolation, quarantine, social distancing, decontamination).
- Based on COVID-19 lessons learned, develop or demonstrate the ability to share accurate and timely information to vulnerable populations (e.g., providing non-English speaking translators, American Sign Language interpreters).
- Discuss necessary components for establishing, or validating, resilient medical supply chains to address the challenges in transporting and receiving health care equipment and supplies across national, state, county, local, tribal, and territorial borders.
- Demonstrate the ability to request external resources, such as federal assistance or assistance from health care workers in other jurisdictions, to help mitigate staffing shortages.
- Validate the decisions, authorities and process to implement crisis standards of care.
- Validate the ability to manage significant numbers of fatalities.
- Validate the capability to deploy, dispense and distribute medical countermeasures (MCMs) to all segments of the population, including pediatric patients and other vulnerable populations.

## 2.5. Supply Chain Resilience

Enhance supply chain resilience by fostering awareness and collaboration among key supply chain stakeholders and promoting mitigation activities, examining supply chain disruptions and identifying potential impacts to the private sector and whole community to develop effective emergency response plans and operate efficiently, minimizing response and recovery operations.

### 2.5.1. WHY IS THIS PEP IMPORTANT?

Supply chains are critical to national capability across all major threats and hazards. Even short-lived impacts to the supply chain can prevent communities from accessing critical goods and services. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the interconnectedness of the major systems on which we rely. For example, every level of government in the United States sought the same personal protective equipment resources. As a result, COVID-19 placed unprecedented strain on the ability to acquire, manage and allocate life-saving resources to impacted communities. Natural disasters have also demonstrated the cascading vulnerabilities to supply chains for critical medical equipment. In the wake of Hurricane Maria, United States hospitals faced widespread shortages of IV saline bags due to damaged and shut-down factories, exacerbated by an increased demand due to a worse-than-typical flu season.<sup>14</sup> These recent supply chain disruptions reveal the extent to which economic integration and technological change have increased U.S. interdependence with both partners and competitors.

EO 14017: America’s Supply Chain states that “pandemics and other biological threats, cyber-attacks, climate shocks and extreme weather incidents, terrorist attacks, geopolitical and economic competition, and other conditions can reduce critical manufacturing capacity and the availability and integrity of critical goods, products, and services”.<sup>15</sup> A 2021 THIRA/SPR analysis (Section 1.2.1) shows that 66% of communities identified the Volunteer Management functional area within the Logistics and Supply Chain Management core capability as having high exercise gaps. When examining THIRA/SPR capability targets, 29% of communities identified Life Sustaining Goods Delivery as the lowest target achieved. Overall, 54% of communities reported that their current capability to address Logistics and Supply Chain Management is significantly below their worst-case scenario impacts, reinforcing the need to align NEP exercise priorities with this continuous area for improvement.

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<sup>14</sup> [FEMA 2021 National Preparedness Report](#).

<sup>15</sup> [EO 14017: America’s Supply Chains, February 24, 2021](#).

### 2.5.2. PEP ALIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Exercises aligned to the Supply Chain Resilience PEP must examine **at least two** of the following objectives:

- Discuss the organization's interdependencies and how these interdependencies impact the supply chain.
- Discuss or map supply chains, including distribution centers, information flow and communications.
- Identify critical supply chain vulnerabilities that affect economic security and resilience, including overarching issues, risks and bottlenecks resulting from supply-side constraints and shifts in transportation demand.
- Assess the ability to devolve essential functions and services given prolonged disruptions to the integrated global supply chain.
- Discuss how to, or demonstrate the ability to, incorporate private sector companies, government partners, volunteer organizations and/or academia partners, into information sharing processes for effective domestic supply chain risk management practices.
- Identify coordination mechanisms across whole community partners to protect intellectual property and promote reliable and responsible supply chains, with a special focus on diversifying supply chains in key sectors, including semiconductors, critical minerals and batteries.
- Discuss impacts to resource management and prioritization in response to an incident, including moving, staging and delivering commodities and equipment and equitably providing resources to vulnerable populations.
- Discuss the risks of supply chain failures or disruptions to communities without access to critical goods.
- Examine the ability of jurisdictions to share resources through mutual aid agreements or Emergency Management Assistance Compacts (EMACs).

## 2.6. Recovery

Examine whole community capabilities to accelerate the recovery process through the lifecycle of a disaster by identifying vulnerable population requirements, using risk assessment and mitigation strategies, increasing community resilience and maintaining short- and long-term recovery efforts.

### 2.6.1. WHY IS THIS PEP IMPORTANT?

One of the guiding principles of the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)<sup>16</sup> calls for pre-disaster planning as a means to greatly reduce the magnitude of recovery and risk. The NDRF emphasizes that pre-disaster preparedness includes “coordinating with whole community partners, mitigating risks, incorporating continuity planning, identifying resources, and developing capacity to effectively manage the recovery process, through collaborative and inclusive planning processes.” Whole community partners play a critical role in pre-disaster preparedness by promoting coordination (e.g., resource sharing) and capability building. Integrating the whole community into exercises allows local governments to consider the unique needs of vulnerable populations, incorporate equity into recovery activities, address hazard mitigation planning and help communities quickly recover from a disaster.

The 2021 National Preparedness Report<sup>17</sup> states that of the \$8.3 billion available in preparedness grant funds, communities directed about 13% to capabilities in the Mitigation, Protection and Recovery mission areas, with the least amount (1%) to recovery capabilities. In a 2021 THIRA/SPR analysis, three of the top five capability targets with the lowest target achievements that were also exercise priorities were recovery targets. This analysis also demonstrated that 48% of communities have low achievement of the Long-Term Housing and Relocation Assistance capability target, emphasizing the need to further examine the recovery housing continuum. Additionally, 35% of communities have low achievement of the Public Risk Awareness capability target, a functional area for the Community Resilience core capability. Community resilience and disaster housing are key indicators of recovery, further strengthening the need to examine recovery as a NEP exercise priority.

The federal government offers tools and resources to help jurisdictions assess risks and economic impacts to their specific areas, including the:

- [County Economic Impact Index](#)
- [County High-Level Economic Recovery and Resilience Index](#)
- [CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau's Emergency Management page](#)

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<sup>16</sup> [FEMA's National Disaster Recovery Framework, June 2016.](#)

<sup>17</sup> [FEMA's National Preparedness Report, December 2021.](#)

### 2.6.2. PEP ALIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Generally, exercises aligned to this PEP should focus on housing, disaster case management, and/or economic recovery. Exercises aligned to this PEP must include recovery SMEs as participants.

Exercises aligned to the Recovery PEP must examine **at least two** of the following objectives:

- Validate recovery plans, policies or procedures to define roles and responsibilities, establish communication mechanisms, and detail coordination among various stakeholders across the government, private and nongovernmental sectors.
- Discuss the importance of equitable recovery, including how disaster recovery impacts individuals and communities differently and how communities can remove barriers to access.
- Discuss the prioritized reconstitution of government functions and services following the activation of continuity plans and subsequent distribution of those functions and services to continuity locations.
- Examine long-term effects of disaster-related financial risks and associated policies, including community impacts to regions or areas vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, individuals with access and functional needs and/or low-income communities.
- Discuss barriers to distributing authority and responsibility beyond the National Capital Region to identify legislative changes or revisions to executive orders and policies that would ensure continuous leadership of essential functions and services during a prolonged recovery initiative.
- Assess the ability of federal, SLTT, private and/or nonprofit sector community partners to coordinate, build and maintain housing capabilities through all stages of recovery (e.g., immediate sheltering, short-term housing and long-term housing strategies).
- Identify capability gaps and resources to restore public health (hospitals) and social services (childcare, mental health), in coordination with government agencies and nonprofit, disability, healthcare and community organizations.
- Discuss the disaster impacts to natural and cultural resources in coordination with SMEs (e.g., historical preservation, cultural) to determine strategies for protection and preservation as part of community recovery.

Other exercises that may align to this PEP include:

- Exercises that are federal, multi-state and/or multi-region in scope and examine recovery for non-Stafford Act declarations.
- Exercises that are federal, multi-state and/or multi-region in scope and examine disaster case management.

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## Appendix A: Data Sources

FEMA reviewed and analyzed a comprehensive selection of strategy and policy documents, datasets, after-action reports (AARs) and other sources to distill key national preparedness trends and capabilities that require examination and validation through exercises. This appendix lists all data sources.

### Sources by Type

#### DOCTRINE, STRATEGY AND POLICY DOCUMENTS

- 2018–2022 Department of Justice Strategic Plan
- 2020 Federal Mission Resilience Strategy
- 2021 Executive Office American Pandemic Preparedness: Transforming Our Capabilities
- 2021 FEMA National Preparedness Report
- 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the United States Intelligence Community
- 2022 National Biodefense Strategy
- 2020–2024 Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Labor Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of State Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Transportation Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Treasury Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Environmental Protection Agency Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Health and Human Services Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Housing and Urban Development Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Agriculture Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Commerce Strategic Plan
- 2022–2027 Government Accountability Office Strategic Plan
- Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response National Health Security Strategy
- Executive Office American Pandemic Preparedness: Transforming Our Capabilities
- EO 13985: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce
- EO 13990: Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis (2021)
- EO 13961: Governance and Integration of Federal Mission Resilience
- EO 14008: United States International Climate Finance Plan

- EO 14028: Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity
- EO 14030: Climate-Related Financial Risk
- 2022–2026 FEMA Strategic Plan
- White House National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

### **PREPAREDNESS DATA, INTELLIGENCE & RISK ASSESSMENTS**

- United States Global Change Research Program Fourth National Climate Assessment
- United States Government Accountability Office: Dedicated Leadership Needed to Address Limited Progress in Most High-Risk Areas

### **Sources by PEP**

#### **CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION**

- 2020 Federal Mission Resilience Strategy
- 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the United States Intelligence Community
- 2022–2026 Department of State Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Transportation Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Treasury Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Environmental Protection Agency Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Housing and Urban Development Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Agriculture Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Commerce Strategic Plan
- EO 13961: Governance and Integration of Federal Mission Resilience
- EO 13990: Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis
- EO 14008: United States International Climate Finance Plan
- EO 14030: Climate-Related Financial Risk
- 2022–2026 FEMA Strategic Plan
- United States Global Change Research Program Fourth National Climate Assessment
- United States Government Accountability Office: Dedicated Leadership Needed to Address Limited Progress in Most High-Risk Areas

#### **COMPLEX INCIDENT COORDINATION**

- 2020 Federal Mission Resilience Strategy
- 2020–2024 Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan

- 2021 FEMA National Preparedness Report
- 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the United States Intelligence Community
- 2022 National Biodefense Strategy
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Commerce Strategic Plan
- EO 13961: Governance and Integration of Federal Mission Resilience
- Executive Office American Pandemic Preparedness: Transforming Our Capabilities
- United States Global Change Research Program Fourth National Climate Assessment
- White House National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

### **CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE CYBERSECURITY**

- 2018–2022 Department of Justice Strategic Plan
- 2020–2024 Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan
- 2021 FEMA National Preparedness Report
- 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the United States Intelligence Community
- 2022–2026 Department of State Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Transportation Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Environmental Protection Agency Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Agriculture Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Commerce Strategic Plan
- EO 14028: Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity
- United States Government Accountability Office: Dedicated Leadership Needed to Address Limited Progress in Most High-Risk Areas

### **PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES**

- 2021 FEMA National Preparedness Report
- 2022 Annual Threat Assessment of the United States Intelligence Community
- 2022 National Biodefense Strategy
- 2022–2026 Department of Labor Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Environmental Protection Agency Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Health and Human Services Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Housing and Urban Development Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Agriculture Strategic Plan
- Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response National Health Security Strategy

- Executive Office American Pandemic Preparedness: Transforming Our Capabilities
- EO 13990: Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis
- United States Global Change Research Program Fourth National Climate Assessment
- United States Government Accountability Office: Dedicated Leadership Needed to Address Limited Progress in Most High-Risk Areas
- White House National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

### **SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE**

- 2021 FEMA National Preparedness Report
- 2022–2026 Department of State Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Transportation Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Treasury Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Health and Human Services Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Housing and Urban Development Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Agriculture Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 United States Department of Commerce Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 FEMA Strategic Plan
- EO 13961: Governance and Integration of Federal Mission Resilience
- Executive Office American Pandemic Preparedness: Transforming Our Capabilities

### **RECOVERY**

- 2019 National Response Framework
- 2021 FEMA National Preparedness Report
- 2022–2026 Department of Labor Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Transportation Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Department of Treasury Strategic Plan
- 2022–2027 Government Accountability Office Strategic Plan
- 2022–2026 Housing and Urban Development Strategic Plan
- EO 13985: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce
- 2022–2026 FEMA Strategic Plan
- United States Global Change Research Program Fourth National Climate Assessment

- United States Government Accountability Office: Dedicated Leadership Needed to Address Limited Progress in Most High-Risk Areas
- White House National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan

## Appendix B: Acronyms

CISA	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
CTEP	CISA Tabletop Exercise Package
DAT	Data Analysis Tool
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EIC	Exercise Implementation Committee
EMAC	Emergency Management Assistance Compact
FedVTE	Federal Virtual Training Environment
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IPP	Integrated Preparedness Plan
MCM	Medical Countermeasures
MYTEP	Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan
NCIRP	National Cyber Incident Response Plan
NDRF	National Disaster Recovery Framework
NED	National Exercise Division
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPR	National Preparedness Report
PEP	Principals’ Exercise Priorities
POETE	Planning, Organization, Exercise, Training, Equipment
PSP	Principals’ Strategic Priorities
SLTT	State, Local, Tribal, Territorial
SME	Subject-Matter Expert
SPR	State Preparedness Report
TEP	Training and Exercise Plan
THIRA	Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
U.S.C	United States Code
USGCRP	United States Global Change Research Program