

- Practice using the communication network.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Improve individual performance.
- Improve readiness for a real incident.

After personnel are trained, the plan can be tested through one of three types of exercises: Tabletop, Functional and Full-scale.

1. Tabletop Exercises

A table top exercise is a simulation activity in which a scenario is presented and participants in the exercise respond as if the scenario were really happening. New information is presented as the situation unfolds, making the participants reconsider their previous decisions and plan their next actions based on the new information. The scenario can be presented orally by the exercise controller, in written text or by audio or video means. A typical tabletop exercise will take about 2 hours.

Tabletop exercises are particularly useful to:

- Enable decision makers to walk through an incident and make decisions similar to those in an actual incident.
- Provide a forum for discussion of plans, policies and procedures in a low-stress, low-risk environment.
- Resolve questions of coordination and responsibility.

It is particularly helpful to conduct tabletop exercises on new or newly revised plans before wider-scale, higher-risk exercises are conducted.

2. Functional Exercises

Functional exercises simulate a function within a real incident. Functional exercises test a part of COOP activation independently of other responders.

3. Full-Scale Exercises

Full-scale exercises test an agency's total response capability for COOP situations. These exercises are as close to reality as possible, with actual deployment of personnel and activation of systems and equipment.