



New Jersey Office of Emergency Management Directive

	EFFECTIVE DATE	NUMBER
	April 17, 2024	NJOEM-14 (2024)
	SUBJECT	
	Emergency Management Exercises: Standards, Requirements and Responsibilities	
REFERENCE	EXPIRES	
Directive NJOEM-5 (2022); NJOEM-6 (2022); Directive NJOEM-7 (2022); Directive NJOEM-8 (2022); NJOEM-9 (2022); Directive NJOEM-11 (2023); N.J.S.A. 39:4-197.1; FEMA's Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101, version 3 (September 2021); the State Emergency Management Program Stakeholders (SEMPS) policy; Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) (January 2020)	N/A	
	RESCINDS	
	Directive #74	

Effective emergency planning includes continuous review and improvement of plans through exercising and testing plan components (e.g., equipment, staffing, training, procedures, etc.) and validating the capabilities necessary for plan implementation. Conducting well-designed and objectively evaluated exercises is fundamental to enhancing the State's preparedness. In New Jersey, State, county, and municipal offices of emergency management (OEM) are required to conduct exercises periodically to maintain program standards, comply with statutory mandates and best practices, and satisfy grant eligibility requirements, including, but not limited to:

- directives issued through the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM), such as Directive NJOEM-5 (2022), Directive NJOEM-6 (2022), Directive NJOEM-7 (2022), Directive NJOEM-8 (2022), Directive NJOEM-9 (2022), and Directive NJOEM-11(2023),
- the federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA),
- the Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP) Program guidance issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA),
- Comprehensive Planning Guide 101, v. 3 (September 2021) (CPG 101),
- the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Cooperative Agreement administered by the Centers for Disease Control, and
- emergency management grant programs, such as Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and Emergency Management Agency Assistance (EMAA).

As the State's lead emergency management agency, NJOEM, through the Preparedness Bureau's Training and Exercise Unit (TEU), is responsible for conducting all-hazards, State-level emergency management exercises to test the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP). The TEU is also responsible for providing training and guidance on exercise methodology to State, county, and municipal emergency management agencies, and approving and validating exercises for compliance with applicable NJOEM directives.

NJOEM promotes the use of the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) principles and processes as a means of establishing a common approach to exercising for building, sustaining, and assessing emergency management capabilities of all levels of government and the private sector. HSEEP provides flexible, scalable, and adaptable methods to accomplish these objectives, through activities such as workshops, drills, tabletop exercises, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises. NJOEM generally recommends smaller, more frequent, capabilities-based exercises, that generate meaningful evaluation and feedback. Well-planned tabletop and functional exercises deliver a high return on investment and may help agencies build broader, more comprehensive full-scale exercises.

This Directive NJOEM-14 (2024) rescinds and replaces Directive 74. It describes the emergency management exercise program elements for agencies that support the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP), and for county and municipal offices of emergency management and their key stakeholders. Specifically, this Directive addresses the:

- types and frequency of exercises,
- responsibilities of NJOEM, State Emergency Management Program Stakeholders (SEMPS) agencies, and county and municipal offices of emergency management to design, conduct and participate in exercises to test incident management and all-hazards response capabilities,
- standards for meaningful evaluation and after-action reporting, and
- processes for obtaining exercise credit from NJOEM TEU for exercises that comply with the standards set forth in this Directive.

This Directive consists of the following numbered sections:

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I. Definitions

1. **Full-scale Exercise:** an operations-based exercise involving multiple agencies, jurisdictions, or organizations, with real-time movement of equipment and personnel.
2. **Functional Exercise:** an operations-based exercise, designed to assess and evaluate functions and capabilities, in a realistic, real-time environment, where movement of personnel and equipment is simulated.
3. **Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP):** a set of guiding principles for exercise and evaluation programs through a consistent approach to capability-based exercise program management using a common methodology for designing, sustaining, and delivering capabilities. The program is designed to use lessons learned and best practices from the exercise community and adapt to the needs of each jurisdiction/organization regardless of size.
4. **Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP):** a document describing a jurisdiction's preparedness priorities, and associated planning, equipment, organizational, training, and exercise activities to address identified threats/hazards and sustain capabilities.
5. **Real-world Event:** a planned event or natural, human-caused, or technological incident which, depending on its characteristics, may or may not serve as a valid substitute for an exercise.
6. **Tabletop Exercise:** a discussion-based exercise that drives player dialogue about a specific scenario, to facilitate understanding, identify strengths and areas for improvement, or validate plans, policies, and procedures.

II. NJOEM Responsibilities

1. NJOEM TEU oversees the State's emergency management exercise program and develops and maintains the State's IPP, as required by EMPG.
2. NJOEM shall annually conduct tabletop, functional or full-scale exercises designed to test the capabilities for the Incident Command System and response to all hazards pursuant to the SEOP. NJOEM TEU shall direct the design, development, conduct and evaluation of periodic State-level exercises that are consistent with the principles of HSEEP and pursuant to the State's IPP.
 - a. NJOEM TEU personnel shall:
 - i. serve as the exercise director for State-level exercises managed by NJOEM and assemble teams to design them,
 - ii. include key stakeholders at the federal, state, and local level, and private sector and other entities/organizations in exercise design and conduct,
 - iii. follow HSEEP and other relevant standards, and
 - iv. facilitate the After-Action Review.
3. NJOEM TEU will assist county and municipal offices of emergency management in fulfilling the exercise requirements set forth in NJOEM directives and other NJOEM mandates.

- a. NJOEM TEU may, in its discretion and to the extent possible based upon resources and operational priorities, provide consultation and guidance for exercise programs of other emergency management stakeholders, including but not limited to, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.
4. NJOEM TEU shall also facilitate training for exercise design, development, conduct, and evaluation, and disseminate guidance and best practices with the goal of increasing the value of exercises and the competence of exercise practitioners throughout the State.
5. NJOEM TEU shall be responsible for approving and awarding exercise credits, and maintaining records for State, county and municipal emergency management exercises that meet NJOEM standards. TEU shall award credit for exercises that meet thresholds for scope and complexity, as set forth in section III.B. Exercises for which credit is granted by NJOEM TEU shall be considered as meeting the exercise requirements set forth in NJOEM Directives and other NJOEM mandates.
6. A response to real-world events (planned events or incidents), which demonstrates the same level of complexity as the exercise criteria in Section III, may substitute for an exercise subject to the discretion of NJOEM TEU. Upon a request for credit, NJOEM shall retain sole discretion to decide whether to grant credit.
 - a. Credit will not be awarded for events that are considered small-scale or routine (e.g. residential structure fires, a two-car motor vehicle crash, or a law enforcement and emergency medical services response to an assault). Additionally, real world events must adhere to the same evaluation criteria as specified for exercises in Section III.B.6.
7. For exercises or real-world events to receive credit from NJOEM, exercise directors should follow the credit procedures in Section IV.

III. Agency Exercise Responsibilities

A. State Emergency Management Program Stakeholders (SEMPS)

1. SEMPS agencies, including Members and At Large Participants (per the SEMPS Policy), shall be invited to attend and contribute to meetings and workshops to review and update the State's IPP.
2. SEMPS agencies are expected to participate as players in State-level exercises, as NJOEM deems appropriate based on the scope and objectives of the exercise, for the purpose of testing combined capabilities. Other State agencies and stakeholders that play a role in emergency management may be invited to participate in State-level exercises, depending on the nature, scope, and scale of the exercise.
3. Upon request of NJOEM TEU, SEMPS agencies shall endeavor to provide personnel to support the exercise planning and conduct of State-level exercises, as members of the exercise design team, controllers, evaluators, observers, and other supporting roles.
4. When feasible, based upon resources and operational priorities, SEMPS agencies should also support county and/or municipal-level exercises, as appropriate.

5. SEMPS agencies and other agencies that participate in State or local-level exercises shall attend After Action Meetings and/or provide input into any After Action Report or Improvement Plan upon request of the exercise director.

B. County/Municipal OEMs

County and municipal OEMs shall perform the following activities, subject to verification by NJOEM TEU in coordination with the NJOEM Emergency Response Bureau:

1. County and municipal OEMs will develop and maintain a 3-year schedule of planned exercises and share it with the applicable Emergency Management Council.
2. County and municipal OEMs will participate in at least one tabletop, functional, or full-scale exercise per year. Participation is defined as performing the role of a player in an exercise to test an agency's capabilities.
 - a. Every two years, the annual exercise must be either a functional or full-scale exercise.
3. In addition to the county or municipal OEM, the annual exercise must involve at least two other agencies that support the jurisdiction's EOP, including, but not limited to government agencies (e.g. fire, EMS, law enforcement, etc.), non-governmental organizations, and community/faith-based groups.
4. The annual exercise must test at least two capabilities from the jurisdiction's EOP.
5. The exercise may be managed by the county/municipal OEM or another partner agency. Management is defined as directing the design, development, conduct, and evaluation of an exercise.
6. The exercise must apply a formal evaluation process and produce an After-Action Report, which addresses the strengths and areas of improvement related to the capabilities of the county or municipal OEM and its supporting agencies.
7. Participation in other types of exercises (e.g., a single capability drill) is encouraged, but does not satisfy the requirements of this Section.

IV. Exercise Credit Procedures

A. NJOEM Exercise Reporting Platform

1. NJOEM TEU will provide a platform for agencies to submit evidence of exercises or real-world events that satisfy the exercise requirements set forth in this Directive. TEU shall post information and guidance about the submission process on the TEU platform.
2. NJOEM TEU will review submissions to the platform and approve those that meet the standards set forth in this Directive. TEU may request additional information to make the determination.
3. NJOEM's exercise platform will provide an approval or rejection notification, which submitters can use for grant documentation.

B. County/Municipal Submission Process

1. Exercises and planned events: During the planning phase for exercises and real-world planned events, county and municipal OEMs should submit the information requested to the platform, for pre-approval. When appropriate, NJOEM TEU will provide guidance to the OEM coordinator to modify the exercise design or the scope and management of a planned event with the goal of ensuring that it meets the criteria.
 - a. Requests for approval of exercises/planned events after the fact may be submitted but will not have the benefit of TEU advance review and consultation.
2. Real world incidents: The county or municipal OEM must submit potentially qualifying real-world incidents to the platform, for final approval, following their completion.
3. Upon request of NJOEM TEU, the county or municipal OEM staff will provide supplemental details of the exercise or real-world incident or event that may be required to assist NJOEM during the review process.

V. Additional Requirements

1. Exercise players and other participants must take all steps necessary and adhere to best practices to prevent unintended actions, interactions, and miscommunications to minimize the possibility of confusing exercise activity with real world events.
 - a. For example, all verbal and written communications in connection with the conduct of an exercise should prominently contain phrases such as "THIS IS AN EXERCISE" or "EXERCISE EXERCISE EXERCISE."
 - b. State, county or municipal emergency management exercises that impact the public must provide adequate advanced messaging to inform the surrounding communities, relevant agencies, and other interested parties. Public information channels shall be maintained throughout the conduct of any such exercise that involves the public to address any concerns that may arise.
2. For full-scale exercises, appropriate approvals must be obtained for the use of any roadway from the applicable jurisdiction. Note: If an exercise is reasonably expected to interrupt traffic on a state highway, advance approval must be obtained from the New Jersey Department of Transportation through NJOEM.

VI. Effect:

This directive rescinds and replaces Directive 74. This order shall take effect immediately.



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State Director of Emergency Management