

# Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan



**Section 1-Exercises**

*January 2025*

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# Section 1 – 2 Exercises

## I. PURPOSE

Exercises assess and validate capabilities' speed, effectiveness, and efficiency and test the adequacy of policies, plans, procedures, and protocols in a risk-free environment. Aside from actual events, they provide the best means of evaluating target capabilities. This exercise annex provides the foundation for the philosophy and methodology that Horry County will utilize in its exercise program.

## II. MISSION

Horry County Emergency Management's mission is to lead the county's all-hazards comprehensive emergency management program through collaborative planning, educating its citizens, businesses, and visitors, and coordinating response operations and recovery initiatives.

## III. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTION

### A. Situation

1. The Horry County Emergency Management Department has an established exercise program that regularly tests the skills, abilities, and experience of emergency personnel and the plans, policies, procedures, equipment, and facilities of the overall Emergency Management Program.
2. The Horry County Exercise Program is modeled after and adheres to the best practices and principles outlined in the federal Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).
3. Agency-specific exercises such as seminars, workshops, and drills not directly affiliated with the Emergency Management Program regularly occur throughout Horry County. Therefore, they are not considered a part of the exercise program.
4. Internal and external mandates and requirements (such as exercises required for specific grant funding) may influence some of the conducted exercises.
5. Horry County, in a collaborative effort with local, state, regional, and federal partners, has established and annually updates a Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan (MYTEP).
6. Horry County will utilize the MYTEP as a guideline for prioritizing and scheduling exercises.
7. Horry County utilizes and incorporates HSEEP principles and templates in creating the MYTEP.

### B. Assumptions

1. Responders will continue to conduct or participate in job or organization-specific exercises per their organization's SOPs. However, these exercises will not formally be scheduled through the MYTEP.

2. Assistance in the form of grants, service offerings, and direct assistance for exercises will continue to be available from the regional, state, and federal levels.
3. Information received by the needs assessment and exercise/after-action report/improvement plan (AAR/IP) will provide an accurate means of prioritizing the exercises needed to build the local capabilities of Horry County.

#### **IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

##### **A. General**

Under the direction of the appropriate elected officials or their designees, Horry County Emergency Management Department will coordinate emergency preparedness activities in accordance with the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan to ensure the inclusion of exercises for all planning, support, and response agencies. Departments, authorities, agencies, and all private response organizations are responsible for ensuring their personnel contribute and participate in the Horry County Exercise Program.

##### **B. Exercise Needs Assessment**

1. Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop (IPPW)
  - a. Horry County will conduct a needs assessment and IPPW annually.
  - b. Prior to the annual IPPW, Horry County Emergency Management will conduct a needs assessment via an online survey, which is distributed to representatives from partnering agencies
  - c. The needs assessment will address all personnel with responsibilities in the Emergency Management Department, including but not limited to:
    1. Emergency management/emergency response staff
    2. Emergency Support Function (ESF) lead agencies
    3. Key public officials
    4. State and Federal partner agencies
    5. Local private and non-governmental agencies that are key stakeholders in the Emergency Management Program
  - d. Horry County Emergency Management Department will compile results from the needs assessment along with the following:
    1. Current internal and external exercise requirements
    2. Deficiencies identified in the AAR/IP process during exercises and real incidents
    3. Exercise priorities contained in the State and Federal homeland security strategy and State of South Carolina Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan

- e. All compiled results will be categorized within target capabilities, and exercise initiatives will be voted on and prioritized at the annual IPPW.

## 2. Internal and External Training Requirements and Mandates

### a. Federal Requirements

1. HSEEP methodology and tools will be utilized in formal exercise design for Horry County. FEMA HSEEP Volume I explains the purpose of HSEEP is to:

*"Provide common exercise policy and program guidance that constitutes a national standard for exercises. HSEEP includes consistent terminology that can be used by all exercise planners, regardless of the nature and composition of their sponsoring agency or organization."*

*(Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, January 2020)*

2. Exercises for the jurisdiction will be established and coordinated through the IPPW, utilizing the HSEEP Planning Cycle.

### b. State Requirements

1. The South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) requires local emergency management programs to conduct exercises as a requirement for receiving Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) funding. The guidelines set forth by SCEMD are as follows:
  - a) Each EMPG jurisdiction will document an annual exercise on the Statement of Work (SOW) and submit an After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) to the SCEMD Exercise Officer.
  - b) SCEMD requires one (1) exercise conducted each federal fiscal year. This requirement can be a Tabletop, Functional, or Full-Scale exercise. This exercise requirement **MUST** be at least equivalent to a Tabletop exercise, and SCEMD strongly recommends conducting a Functional or Full-Scale exercise annually.
  - c) All AARs submitted to SCEMD must utilize the AAR formatting template provided by HSEEP.
2. The SCEMD will maintain a database of AARs and corrective actions for all jurisdictions receiving EMPG funding.

## C. Exercise Program Management

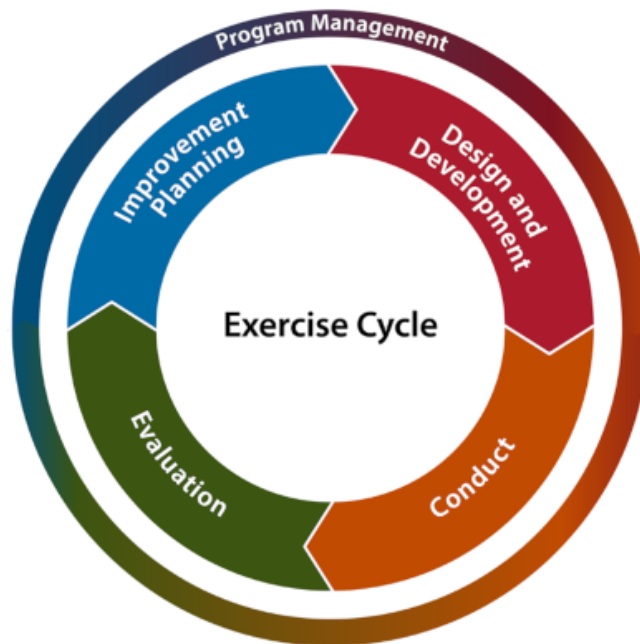
### 1. Exercise Focus

- a. The focus of the Horry County Exercise Program is to provide a self-sustaining system for regularly testing the skills, abilities, and experience of emergency personnel and the jurisdiction's plans, policies, procedures, equipment, and facilities.
- b. The Exercise Program utilizes a capabilities-based approach to exercise program management, foundation, design, development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. HSEEP defines capabilities-based planning as:

*"Planning, under uncertainty, to build and sustain capabilities suitable for a wide range of threats and hazards while working within an economic framework that necessitates prioritization and choice. This approach integrates realistic scenarios to evaluate preparedness efforts and supports the National Preparedness Goal's Core Capabilities, which form the foundation for preparedness planning, training, exercises, and evaluation."*

*(Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, January 2020)*

- c. Horry County will utilize the HSEEP preparedness cycle for an exercise program and project management.
- d. The exercise program will utilize a range of plausible scenarios based on the hazards identified by Horry County (*see Horry County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan*). While the exercise program will be tailored to the jurisdiction's identified hazards, the approach will be capabilities-based instead of hazard-based.

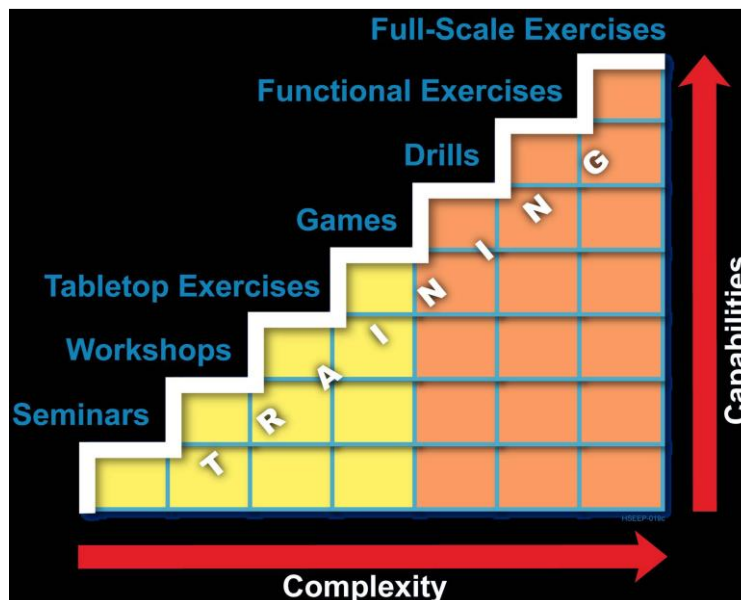


## 2. Exercise Project Management

The Horry County Exercise Program is designed to support capabilities-based planning through a cyclical process of planning, training, exercising, and improvement planning.

### a. Strategic Planning:

- 1) The strategic objectives for the Horry County Exercise program are established through a gap analysis/needs assessment before the annual IPPW.
- 2) All data derived from this needs assessment is compiled and categorized within target capabilities and exercise initiatives, which are voted on and prioritized at the annual IPPW.
- 3) Annually, the IPPW will result in an update of the Horry County MYTEP.
- 4) The MYTEP outlines the prioritized exercise objectives and capabilities and establishes the multi-year training and exercise schedule.
- 5) Horry County utilizes a building-block approach to exercise scheduling and program management:
  - a) As planning and training increase in complexity, Horry County will also increase its capacity to perform critical tasks. The greatest benefit can be achieved through a building-block approach that exposes agencies and exercise participants to gradually increasing levels of complexity, as illustrated by the following example:
  - b) The choice of exercises to be scheduled and implemented will focus on increasing capabilities and building upon lessons learned from previous exercises.



## b. Exercise Design and Development

- 1) Horry County will utilize a systematic exercise design process which may include the following steps:
  - a) Consult Needs Assessment – Exercises will be based upon identified target capabilities identified in the MYTEP. These capabilities reflect the needs or shortfalls identified by Horry County.
  - b) Define Scope – The Scope of the exercise will be established. The scope will be based on various factors, including agency participation, available time, financial constraints, and complexity required for achieving the desired outcome.
  - c) Define Purpose – The purpose of the exercise will be established. This purpose should address specific needs or shortfalls in capabilities identified within the MYTEP and lessons learned from previous exercises.
  - d) Create Objectives – Exercise objectives serve as the cornerstone of exercise design and development and should provide the foundation of the entire exercise. Objectives should be clear, concise, and focused on participant performance. Incorporating the SMART criteria ensures objectives are:
    - Specific: Clearly define what the objective aims to achieve.
    - Measurable: Include criteria to determine success.
    - Achievable: Ensure the objective is realistic given available resources and constraints.
    - Relevant: Align the objective with the exercise's purpose and goals.
    - Time-bound: Specify the timeframe within which the objective should be achieved.
  - e) Establish a Narrative or Scenario - The narrative (scenario) is the key element in the exercise that drives the participant's actions. The scenario must facilitate accomplishing the design objectives and provide a realistic framework for the players to make decisions.
  - f) Create Major/Minor Events - Major and minor events will be created to drive play and lead the participants to make decisions based on the plans, policies, and procedures that Horry County currently has. These events may be integrated into a Master Scenario Events List (MSEL).

## D. Corrective Actions/Improvement Planning

### 1. Exercise Evaluation / Improvement Planning Process

Although the evaluation phase comes towards the end of the exercise cycle, the process and thinking regarding evaluation are present all the way through.

- a. Horry County will, when possible, utilize Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Processes outlined by HSEEP, which may include the following.
  - 1) Plan and Organize the Evaluation - Planning the evaluation is part of the exercise design and objectives development process. The exercise planning team will determine what information needs to be collected, who collects it, and how it will be collected. Additionally, this will involve developing and preparing the forms that evaluators will utilize to capture information during exercise observation and data analysis.



- 2) Observe the Exercise and Collect Data – Evaluators assigned to the exercise will collect data, record observations during the exercise, collect additional data from records and logs, and attend the Hot Wash.
  - 3) Analyze Data – Evaluators will utilize the data collected to identify discrepancies between what happened and what was supposed to happen and develop recommendations for improvement to address those gaps. This analysis will be based on the agencies' plans, policies, and procedures and exercised capabilities.
  - 4) Develop the Draft After-Action Report (AAR) – The AAR records what happened during the exercise. It is used to implement changes and improve jurisdictional capabilities. The AAR provides feedback to participating jurisdictions on their performance during an exercise. It should summarize lessons learned, discuss what happened, analyze the performance of activities, and recommend improvements based on that analysis. The HSEEP AAR template will be utilized when possible or feasible to facilitate a standardized format throughout the Emergency Management Program
  - 5) Conduct After-Action Conference – The After-Action Conference allows the exercise agencies to comment on the draft AAR and develop a draft Improvement Plan (IP) to address any areas for corrective actions identified.
  - 6) Identify Corrective Actions – Corrective actions will be established to address deficiencies revealed during the exercise or real-world event. In addition, the corrective actions will be used to revise relevant plans, policies, and procedures for the Emergency Management Program.
  - 7) Finalize AAR/IP – The IP will be finalized and included in the finalized AAR. The Emergency Management Department will disseminate the AAR to key stakeholders, participating agencies, and selected partners. Delivery of the AAR may be physically printed or delivered digitally at the discretion of the Exercise Director or the primary organization responsible for the exercise.
  - 8) Track Implementation – The finalized AAR/IP will designate a responsible organization, agency, or individual assigned specific responsibility for identified corrective actions and reporting the status of corrective actions.
    - a) All exercises established at the annual IPPW and listed in the MYTEP for which the Horry County Emergency Management Program has been assigned specific responsibility will track corrective actions and improvement plans and provide status reports as specified.
    - b) Agency-specific exercises such as seminars, workshops, and drills not directly affiliated with the Emergency Management Program are not considered a part of the exercise program. Therefore, they are not required to utilize the HSEEP format for corrective action/improvement planning.
    - c) Horry County Emergency Management will have overall responsibility on behalf of the jurisdiction to track the progress of corrective actions.
- b. Real-world events that result in disaster declarations instigate, at a minimum, an EOC level 2 activation that spans multiple operational periods or is complex. This evaluation process will result in an after-action report and corrective actions that will be used to revise relevant plans, policies, and procedures.

- c. Formal evaluation/corrective action procedures may not be utilized for exercises of a limited scope or complexity and some discussion-based exercises. Whether an exercise meets these criteria will be at the discretion of the Exercise Planning Team and the agency with primary responsibility for the exercise being conducted.

## 2. Comprehensive, Multi-Discipline, Self-Sustaining Exercise Program

The Horry County Emergency Management Department aims to build and maintain a comprehensive, multi-discipline, self-sustaining exercise program.

- a. The Horry County Exercise Program intends to include all disciplines within the jurisdiction. This will provide all departments and agencies with continuing opportunities to participate in drills and exercises that will realistically prepare, train, and exercise in a manner consistent with our intended response to emergencies.
- b. The Horry County Exercise Program will be cyclic and be built upon exercises that continually refine and revise the jurisdiction's plans, policies, and procedures.
- c. Exercises will offer a variety of hazard scenarios and complexities to ensure that completed corrective actions and revisions have been correctly implemented, achieved the desired intent, and increased the overall capabilities of the jurisdiction.

## V. ANNEX MAINTENANCE

Horry County Emergency Management is responsible for coordinating, developing, and maintaining the Exercise Annex and is the designated Lead Agency. The Exercise Annex will be updated with the EOP as stated in Section VII, Plan Development and Maintenance.