**Discussion-Based Exercises**

Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises (TTXs), and games. These types of exercises familiarize players with or develop new plans, policies, procedures, and agreements. Discussion-based exercises focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues, and facilitators or presenters lead the discussion, keeping participants moving towards meeting the exercise objectives.

The following tables provide the important information for each type of discussion-based exercise:

**Discussion-Based Exercise Type: Workshop**

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| Workshop:  A discussion-based exercise often employed to develop policy, plans, or procedures. | |
| **Element** | **Considerations and Activities** |
| **Purpose** | * Increased participant interaction with a focus on achieving or building a product * Should have clearly defined objectives, products, or goals and focus on a specific issue |
| **Structure** | * A group of individuals in a venue conducive to discussion * Lectures, presentations, panel or case-study discussions, or decision support tools * Facilitated working breakout sessions * Led by a workshop facilitator/presenter |
| **Participant Goals** | * Develop a product as a group * Obtain consensus * Collect or share information |
| **Conduct Characteristics** | * Effective for small and large groups * Broad attendance by relevant stakeholders * Conducted based on clear objectives/goals * More participant discussion that lecture-based * Frequently uses breakout sessions to explore parts of an issue with similar groups |
| **Outcomes** | * Emergency Operations Plans * Mutual Aid Agreements * Standard Operating Procedures * Continuity of Operations Plans * Workshop Summary Report * An After-Actions Report (AAR)/Improvement Plan (IP) |

**Discussion-Based Exercise Type: Tabletop Exercise**

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| Tabletop Exercise (TTX):  A discussion-based exercise on response to a scenario, intended to generate a dialogue of various issues to facilitate a conceptual understanding, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and/or achieve changes in perceptions about plans, policies, or procedures. | |
| **Element** | **Considerations and Activities** |
| **Purpose** | * Generate discussion of various issues regarding an exercise scenario * Facilitate conceptual understanding, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and/or achieve changes in perceptions |
| **Structure** | * Scenario is presented to describe an event at a simulated time * Players apply their knowledge and skills to a list of problems presented by the facilitator * Problems are discussed as a group, and resolution may be reached and documented for later analysis * Breakout sessions * Discussion led be a facilitator * Presentation |
| **Participant Goals** | * Enhance general awareness * Enhance roles and responsibility understanding * Validate plans and procedures * Discuss concepts and/or assess types of systems in a defined incident |
| **Conduct Characteristics** | * Requires an experienced facilitator * In-depth discussion * Problem-solving environment * All participants should be encouraged to contribute to the discussion and be reminded that they are making decisions in a no-fault environment |
| **Outcomes** | * Recommended revisions to current plans, policies, or procedures * An After-Action Report (AAR)/Improvement Plan (IP) |

**Operations-Based Exercises**

Operations-based exercises include drills, functional exercises (FE), and full-scale exercises (FSE). These exercises validate plans, policies, procedures, and agreements; clarify roles and responsibilities; and identify resource gaps. Operations-based exercises include a real-time response such as initiating communications or mobilizing personnel and resources.

The following tables provide the important information for each type of discussion-based exercise:

**Operations-Based Exercise Type: Functional Exercise**

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| Functional Exercise (FE):  An Operations-based exercise designed to test and evaluate capabilities and functions while in a realistic, real-time environment; however, movement of resources is usually simulated. | |
| **Element** | **Considerations and Activities** |
| **Purpose** | * Validate and evaluate capabilities, multiple functions and/or sub-functions, or interdependent groups of activities * Exercise plans, policies, procedures and staffs involved in management, direction command, and control functions * Apply established plans, policies, and procedures under crisis conditions |
| **Structure** | * Events are projected through a realistic exercise scenario with event updates that drive activity typically at the management level * Controllers typically use a Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) to ensure participant activity remains within predefined boundaries * Evaluators observe behaviors and compare them against established plans, policies, procedures, and standard practices (if applicable) |
| **Participant Goals** | * Validate and evaluate capabilities * Focused on plans, policies, and procedures |
| **Conduct Characteristics** | * Conducted in a realistic environment * Usually simulated deployment of resources and personnel * Use of Simulation Cell and MSEL * Simulators can inject scenario elements * Include controller and evaluators |
| **Outcomes** | * Management evaluation of Emergency Operations Center (EOCs), command post, headquarters, and staff * Performance analysis * Cooperative relationships are strengthened * An After-Action Report (AAR)/Improvement Plan (IP\_ |

**Operations-Based Exercise Type: Full-Scale Exercise**

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| Full-Scale Exercise (FSE):  An operations-based exercise that is typically the most complex and resource-intensive of the exercise types and often involves multiple agencies, jurisdictions/organizations, and real-time movement of resources. | |
| **Element** | **Considerations and Activities** |
| **Purpose** | * Often includes many players operating under cooperative systems such as the incident Command System (ICS) Unified Command * Focus of implementing and analyzing the plans, policies, and procedures that may have been developed in discussion-based exercises and honed during previous, smaller exercises |
| **Structure** | * Events are projected through an exercise scenario with event updates that drive activity at the operational level * Involves multiple agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions * Use of a MSEL drives player actions * SimCell controllers inject scenario elements * The level of support needed may be greater than that needed for other types of exercises * Conducted in a realistic environment to mirror a real incident by presenting complex problems |
| **Participant Goals** | * Demonstrate roles and responsibilities as addressed in pans, policies, and procedures * Coordinate between multiple agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions |
| **Conduct Characteristics** | * Rapid problem solving: critical thinking * Mobilization of personnel and resources * Exercise site is usually large with many activities occurring simultaneously * Site logistics require close monitoring * Safety issues, particularly regarding the use of props and special effects, must be monitored * Demonstrate roles and responsibilities as addressed in plans, policies, and procedures |
| **Outcomes** | * Validate plans, policies, and procedures * Evaluate resource requirements * An After-Action Report (AAR)/Improvement Plan (IP) |