**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)
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**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
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| **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)
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**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\_
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**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)
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