

THIRD-PARTY EVALUATORS FOR TRAINING AND EXERCISES

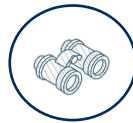
The National Emergency Communications Plan recommends public safety organizations include injects in exercises to test existing communications systems and personnel, to include emerging technologies, for potential system failure and utilize third party evaluators with communications expertise. In this document the NCSWIC Planning, Training, and Exercises (PTE) Committee explores different areas for consideration when including third party evaluators in training and exercises.

POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES



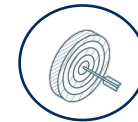
Impartiality

A third-party evaluator may offer neutral, objective feedback on the exercise



Fresh Eyes

Third-party evaluators can bring a fresh set of eyes to the training or exercise



Feedback

A third-party evaluator may give constructive criticism more freely than a team member



Experience

Third-party evaluators can be chosen based on relevant experience in communications and exercise evaluation



Statement of Work

Formal agreements with third-party evaluators ensure complete and timely after-action reports



Free Up Staff

More staff can participate in the exercise as players or exercise control if not assigned to evaluation

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

Costs: Paying for a third-party evaluator can be expensive, diverting funds from other valuable training opportunities

Expectations: A third-party evaluator may come to the exercise with preconceived expectations not aligned to the intent of the exercise

Historical Knowledge: Third-party evaluators may not have historical knowledge about how a specific agency operates

Equipment: Outside evaluators may not be familiar with specific equipment and system configurations



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- To receive impartial feedback, it is best to have impartial evaluators regardless of whether they are internal or external to an agency.
- Giving evaluator roles to vendors or visiting superiors can lead to biased feedback or increased tension.
- Exercise evaluation is a skill; because an individual may be good at running a training does not necessarily mean they can act in an evaluator role.
- Jurisdictional or agency environment should be considered when choosing an evaluator.
- In some cases, vendors familiar with equipment and systems may come forward to offer evaluation services which can lead to more sales pitch than evaluation if not actively managed.
- Quality evaluation relies not only on the evaluator, but on the development and use of proper exercise evaluation tools which follow Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program principles.

For more information on this and other NCSWIC initiatives, contact ncswicgovernance@cisa.dhs.gov or visit <https://www.cisa.gov/safecom/NCSWIC>.