



DEFEND TODAY,
SECURE TOMORROW

Evaluations for Training and Exercises

Emergency Communications by the Numbers

OVERVIEW

Effective training and exercise programs bolster emergency professionals' proficiency with communications equipment, as well as improve their ability to execute policies, plans, and procedures governing emergency communications. A key component of successful training and exercises is assessing and documenting strengths and areas for improvement. While the [SAFECOM Nationwide Survey \(SNS\)](#)¹, showed strong participation in training and exercise programs, it also found that very few public safety organizations are formally evaluating communications capabilities during exercises. By assessing communications during exercises and real-world events and incidents, public safety organizations can improve operational procedures, policies, and training program effectiveness. This document uses SNS data to demonstrate the benefits to emergency communications when training and exercises are evaluated and documented. It also highlights recommended actions in the [National Emergency Communications Plan \(NECP\)](#) that public safety organizations can take to implement effective exercise evaluation programs and improve operational procedures, policies, and training programs.

Evaluations, Training, and Exercises Gaps Identified by the SNS

- **86 percent** of respondents that conduct or participate in emergency communications exercises utilize evaluations
- **41 percent** are not documenting outcomes
- Of those respondents that documented outcomes, only a few are evaluating and documenting **in accordance with the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP)**

BENEFITS OF EVALUATIONS FOR TRAINING AND EXERCISES

The SNS data showed that public safety organizations that evaluate their training and exercises, document and assess, along with the changing operational environment, to adapt future training were much more likely to see significant improvement in their communications capabilities when compared to the national-level statistics.

Organizations that document and assess evaluations to keep training up to date and address gaps and needs are:

- Up to 25 percent more likely** to indicate that their planning processes met their needs for day-to-day situations, and up to **35 percent more likely** in out-of-the-ordinary situations
- Up to **30 percent more likely** to report end users are proficient in using emergency communications capabilities for day-to-day situations, and up to **57 percent more likely** for out-of-the-ordinary situations
- 66 percent more likely** to have standard operating procedures (SOPs) that are updated on a regular basis
- Up to **30 percent more likely** to agree that their personnel were adequately trained in operability, interoperability, and continuity for day-to-day situations, and up to **65 percent more likely** for out-of-the-ordinary situations

¹ The SAFECOM Nationwide Survey (SNS) is a nationwide data collection effort to obtain actionable and critical data that drives our nation's emergency communication policies, programs, and funding. The survey is conducted every five years. Its findings are reflected in the NECP.

TRAINING AND EXERCISE EVALUATIONS IN THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The NECP goal on Training, Exercises, and Evaluation, includes recommendations that public safety organizations can apply to incorporate and improve training and exercise evaluations to help identify and close emergency communications capability gaps.

Goal 3: Training, Exercises, and Evaluation

- ✓ Use the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP) to develop quality exercise evaluation objectives and plans

- ✓ Use outcome-focused documentation to identify and address coverage and systems inadequacies

- ✓ Utilize third-party, peer evaluators, and/or communications support personnel with communications expertise to observe, document, and report outcomes

- ✓ Leverage whole community partners and cross-agency interaction during training, exercises, and the evaluation process to enhance one another's programs

RESOURCES FOR EVALUATING TRAINING AND EXERCISES

- [SAFECOM Nationwide Survey](#)
- [National Emergency Communications Plan](#)
- [Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program](#)
- [Emergency Communications Technical Assistance and Planning Guide](#)
- [National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators \(NCSWIC\) Members](#)

For more information on the SNS or NECP, contact necp@cisa.dhs.gov.