HSEEP Training
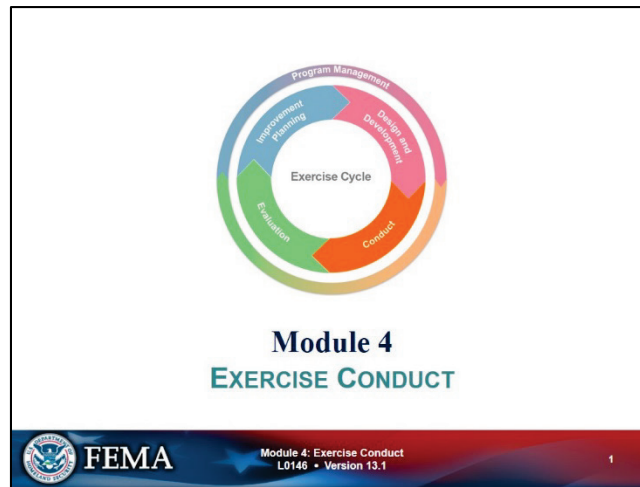
Module 4
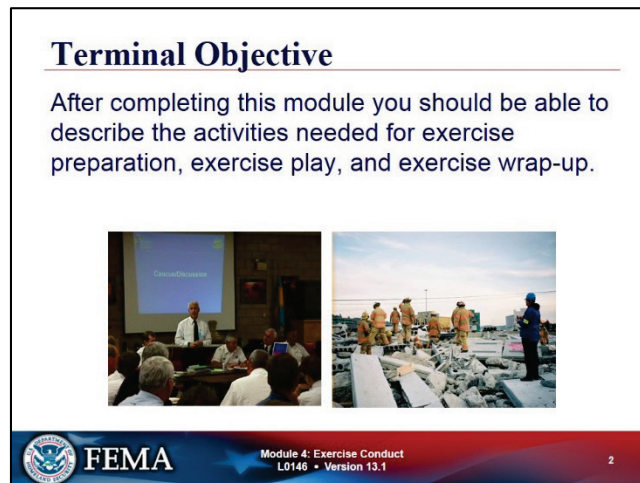
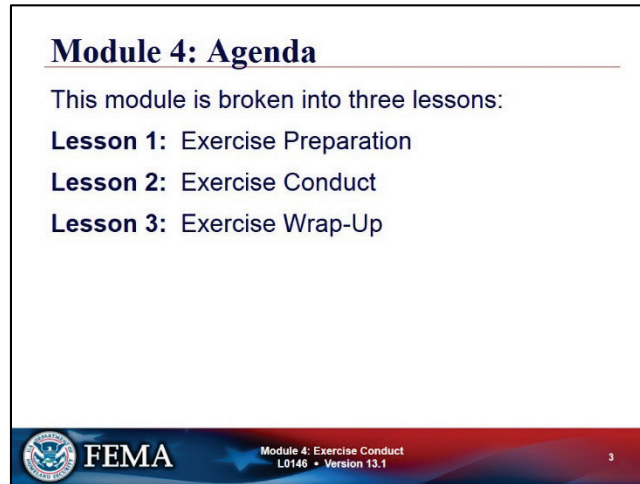*Exercise Conduct*

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Slide 1

HSEEP Module 4: Exercise Conduct

After design and development activities are complete, the exercise is ready to take place. Exercise conduct involves activities such as preparing for exercise play, managing exercise play, and conducting immediate exercise wrap-up activities.

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Module 4: Terminal Objective

After completing this module you should be able to describe the activities needed for exercise preparation, exercise play, and exercise wrap-up.

In this module, you will learn what steps are required to ensure exercise success.

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Module 4: Agenda

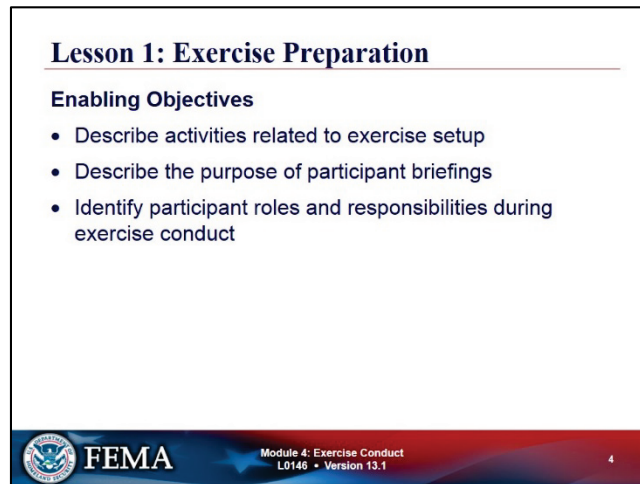The module is broken into three lessons:

Lesson 1: Exercise Preparation
Lesson 2: Exercise Conduct
Lesson 3: Exercise Wrap-Up

Slide 4

Lesson 1: Exercise Preparation

In this first lesson we will review the exercise preparation process and describe activities related to exercise setup, the purpose and importance of participant briefings toward the success of the exercise, and participant roles and responsibilities during exercise conduct.

At the completion of this exercise, you should be prepared to identify these preparation activities, and have a basic understanding of the importance of the Exercise Orientation Briefings in ensuring the validity of the findings to be obtained from exercise conduct.
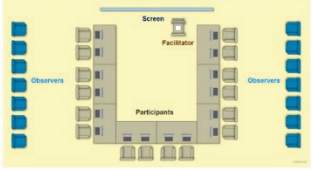
Slide 5

Discussion-based Exercise Set-Up

Members of the exercise planning team assigned to support exercise setup should visit the exercise site at least one day prior to the event to arrange the room, test A/V equipment, and discuss administrative and logistical issues. On the day of the exercise, planning team members should arrive several hours before StartEx to handle setup activities and arrange for registration.

Prior to exercise conduct, the exercise planning team must deliver the necessary exercise materials and equipment, which may include the following:

- SitMans or other written materials for exercise participants
- Multimedia presentation
- Appropriate A/V equipment including televisions, projectors, projection screens, microphones, and speakers
- Table tents for each table
- Name tents for each participant
- Badges identifying the role of each exercise participant
- Sign-in sheets
- Participant Feedback Forms.

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Setup for Operations-Based Exercises

The appropriate exercise planning team members should begin event setup as many days prior to the event as necessary, depending on the scope of the simulated environment. Setup entails arranging briefing rooms and testing A/V equipment, placing props and effects, marking the appropriate exercise areas and their perimeters, and checking for potential safety issues.

On the day of the exercise, all exercise planning team members should arrive several hours before StartEx to handle any remaining logistical or administrative items pertaining to setup, and arrange for registration.

A communications check should also be conducted prior to the start of an operations-based exercise.

Slide 7

Exercise Orientation Briefings

Held before each exercise, **Exercise Orientation Briefings** educate each participant group about their unique roles and responsibilities during exercise play. By scheduling separate briefings for elected and appointed officials, controllers and evaluators, actors, players, and observers, exercise planning team members can avoid giving extraneous material to different groups.

Regardless of their role in the exercise conduct, all individuals participating in the exercise are expected to attend these briefings. Participants must understand that attendance is mandatory in order to ensure the success of the exercise and the safety of all participants. It's important to explain to participants that because each exercise is unique, targets different capabilities, and may involve different players, attending the Exercise Orientation Briefing for one exercise does not mean a participant does not need to attend these briefings for future exercises.

The **Elected and Appointed Officials** who were engaged early in the design and development should be engaged again prior to exercise conduct to ensure the exercise as designed aligns with leadership intent, and to review the decision processes that will be used to end the exercise prematurely in the event of a real-world emergency where players must respond to maintain the sponsor organization's mission response capabilities.

Controller and Evaluator briefings ensure that those serving as controllers and evaluators conduct their responsibilities in a uniform manner; this consistency contributes to the accuracy of the evaluation process. The contingency process identified for use in event of a real world emergency must also be fully understood by controllers who will be responsible for implementing the contingency process.

Controllers should be briefed with an overview of the exercise, the specifics for their assigned location and the schedule of events and MSEL injects they are expected to deliver at each point in the scenario, the control concept chosen for the exercise, the controller's oversight responsibilities, and the contingency process that is to be followed in event of real-world emergency.

Evaluators should receive a briefing with an overview of the evaluation plan, methodology and objectives and evaluation materials. The briefing should include instructions on how evaluators are expected to use the materials in the Evaluator Handbook to observe the exercise including: what to look for, what to record, how to use Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs), and how they will use the collected data to conduct an analysis of exercise outcomes. Evaluators need to understand the exercise methodology and objectives, and know the agenda or schedule.

To ensure evaluators are fully prepared to evaluate exercise play, they should be provided advanced copies of the evaluation materials. Exercise planners should ensure sufficient time is allocated for evaluators to prepare in advance during the exercise planning phase, specifically by studying the appropriate exercise documents and reference materials.

Because each exercise is unique it is important that Controllers and Evaluators understand that *attending an Exercise Orientation Briefing for one exercise does not mean they would not need to attend*

this briefing for future exercises. **Attendance is mandatory** to ensure the success of the exercise, the consistency of the evaluation process, and the safety of all participants.
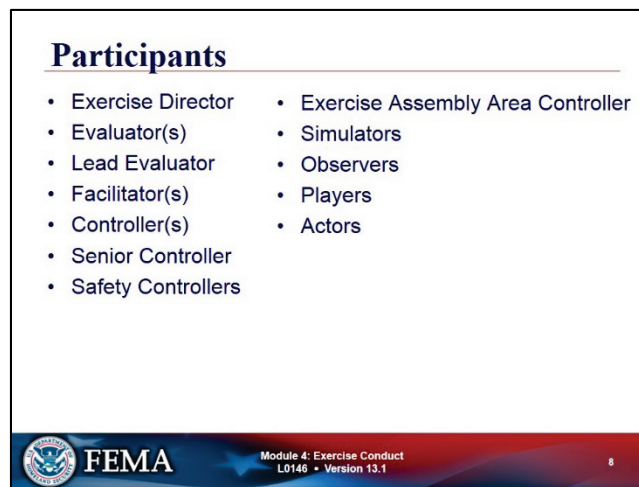
Shortly before the start of the exercise, controllers assigned to oversee each participant group conduct a briefing for their assigned participant group:

The **Actor Controller** leads the actor briefing, providing actors with an overview of the exercise and their expected response behaviors as "victims" during the exercise to add to the realism of the exercise for players.

The **Exercise Assembly Area Controller** conducts a Player Briefing to address their roles and responsibilities, the exercise parameters, safety, security badges, and any logistical exercise concerns or questions from players. The rules of play are established before the exercise to prevent physical harm and property damage. Because operations-based exercises—with the exception of functional exercises—do involve the use of real equipment, resources, and responders, the exercise rules must be established and reviewed well in advance to ensure proper precautions are taken. The rules should be followed to ensure a safe and productive exercise.

The **Lead Controller or the Controller assigned to the Observer/Media Area** conducts an Observer Briefing to inform observers and VIPs about the background of the exercise program, the type of scenario that will be played out during the exercise, the exercise schedule of events, observer limitations and restrictions, and any other miscellaneous information.

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Exercise Participants

During exercise play, participants accomplish various roles and responsibilities aimed at achieving exercise objectives and demonstrating core capabilities.

During the design and development process, the planning team identifies facilitators, controllers and evaluators who will oversee the exercise play.

The sponsoring organization(s) identify and assign players who will take part in the exercise. The number of players involved in an exercise is determined based on the type, scope, objectives, and scenario of the exercise.

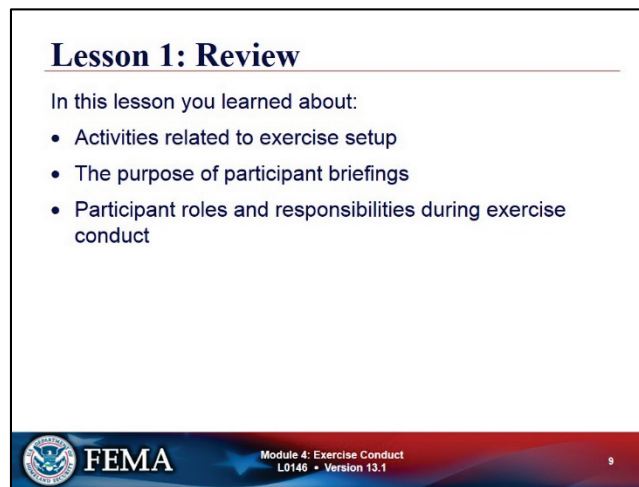Discussion-based exercises usually require participation of senior-level decision makers, while operations-based exercises use a mix of junior and senior staff, chosen based on both rank and experience.

The number of players involved in an exercise is ultimately based on design of the scenario and the capability-based objectives to be validated through exercise conduct. The planning team should work to ensure there will be enough players participating to accomplish the exercise objectives, and manage these numbers to ensure that exercise controllers and evaluators can reasonably monitor their actions during the exercise.

Planners must strive to ensure that the players invited to participate will actually have a role in the exercise. It causes a great deal of frustration when an agency sends a representative and their role is minimal in the event.

Reference: Table 4.1: Exercise Participant Roles, HSEEP Guidance April 2013, pg. 4-4

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Lesson 1: Review

In this lesson you learned about:

- Activities related to exercise setup
- The purpose of participant briefings
- Participant roles and responsibilities during exercise conduct.

Questions?

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Lesson 2: Exercise Conduct

Enabling Objective

After completing this lesson you should be prepared to describe the activities related to the conduct of discussion-based and operations-based exercises.

Slide 11

Discussion-based Conduct

Multimedia Presentation
The multimedia presentation is a crucial vehicle for conveying information to the players. The presentation typically starts with brief remarks by representatives from the exercise planning team or sponsoring organization, and/or elected and appointed officials from the governing jurisdiction. After the opening remarks, the presentation moves into a brief introductory and explanatory phase led by a

facilitator. During this phase, attendees will be introduced to any other facilitators, controllers (games only), or evaluators; given background on the exercise process; and advised about their individual roles and responsibilities.

The facilitator generally presents the multimedia briefing, which describes the scenario and any relevant background information. The facilitator also leads the discussion, introduces spokespersons, poses questions to the audience, and ensures that the schedule remains on track.

Facilitated Discussion
Facilitated group discussions can occur in a plenary session or in breakout groups, which are typically organized by discipline or agency/organization. In both formats, a facilitator is responsible for keeping the discussion focused on the exercise objectives and making sure all issues are explored within the time allotted. A good facilitator should possess:

- The ability to keep side conversations to a minimum, keep discussions on track and within established time limits, control group dynamics and strong personalities, and speak competently and confidently about the subject without dominating conversation.
- Functional area expertise or experience
- Awareness of appropriate plans and procedures
- The ability to listen well and summarize player discussions.

If feasible and/or appropriate, co-facilitators who are knowledgeable about local issues, plans, and procedures may assist the lead facilitator. Also, designating a recorder to take notes allows the facilitator to focus on key discussion issues.

Moderated Discussion
Moderated discussions generally follow breakout discussions. In moderated discussions, a representative from each group presents all participants with summarized results from a group's facilitated discussion. This spokesperson is selected before the facilitated discussion so that he or she can prepare to speak on behalf of the group. During moderated discussions, spokespersons summarize the facilitated discussion, present key findings and issues, and discuss any unresolved issues or questions. At the end of the moderated discussion period, the facilitator opens the floor for questions.

Time for moderated discussion is generally scheduled at the end of each module, with another longer period for each at the conclusion of the exercise. During the moderated discussion, groups should focus only on the material presented in a given module.

Exercise Data Collection
During discussion-based exercises, facilitators help evaluators collect useful data by keeping discussions focused on exercise objectives, core capabilities, capability targets, and critical tasks.

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Operations-based Conduct

During conduct of operations-based exercises, the exercise planning team leader normally serves as the senior controller or Exercise Director. Controllers and evaluators report key activities to the senior controller. The senior controller is responsible for both commencing exercise play by announcing StartEx, and announcing EndEx at the conclusion of the scenario, after a certain period of time has passed, or when all exercise objectives have been met.

Prior to StartEx, rules for exercise play should be disseminated to all participants to establish the parameters that they must follow during the exercise. These rules help players understand their roles in the exercise environment, describe appropriate behavior, establish guidelines for physical contact, and aim to prevent physical harm to individuals or damage to property. Written rules should be reviewed and approved by appropriate authorities.

Exercise areas for operations-based exercises should be clearly defined, and all exercise operations should take place within these designated areas. The exercise area for an FE is usually limited to the control or command centers and their onsite staff members. All other activity and deployment of resources outside of these locations are notional and is simulated by the SimCell staff. The exercise area for an FSE or drill might include one or more simulated incident sites, as well as control or command centers. It is important that these areas be clearly marked to ensure player safety and avoid confusion with real-world operations.

To prevent confusion with real-world communications or accidental deployment of resources, all communications must be clearly identified as exercise-related. This can be accomplished by displaying the phrase "Exercise Material Only" prominently on all typed or printed communications, and by beginning each verbal communication by stating, *"This is an exercise,"* or a similar statement as agreed upon by the exercise planning team. Additionally, players should be supplied with an exercise directory that provides contact information for each of the simulated organizations portrayed by simulators in the SimCell.

Exercise Data Collection

During the exercise, each evaluator should use the EEGs to record both quantitative and qualitative data for capabilities, capability targets, and critical tasks, as assigned by the lead evaluator. During operations-based exercises, evaluators should be strategically pre-positioned in locations at which they can gather useful data, and they should track and record participant actions carefully.

Contingency Process

An effective contingency process is critical to ensure the exercise can be halted, postponed, or canceled if a real-world event takes place. This process should be reviewed with all participants and stakeholders participating in the exercise during exercise briefings.

In order to prevent jeopardizing mission performance in response to real-world events, the exercise planning team should maintain a contingency process to halt, postpone, or cancel an exercise as necessary. Should the conduct of the exercise put at risk any efforts to respond to real-world events or should real-world events hinder conduct of the exercise, the Exercise Director and exercise planning team should convene, in coordination with elected and appointed officials from participating organizations, to determine the appropriate course of action. Following decision on a final course of action, the Exercise Director should communicate that course of action to all exercise planners, participants, and other key stakeholders through all relevant communications mechanisms.

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Control

The control structure for an operations-based exercise describes how controllers communicate and coordinate with one another and how they track exercise information. These procedures, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each controller, should be detailed in the C/E Handbook. During exercise play, controllers carry out these responsibilities and closely monitor exercise play to ensure a safe and effective exercise.

During FE play, SimCell control is particularly important. Because of the great deal of simulated activity that occurs during FEs, these exercises require a robust and detailed MSEL and close communication
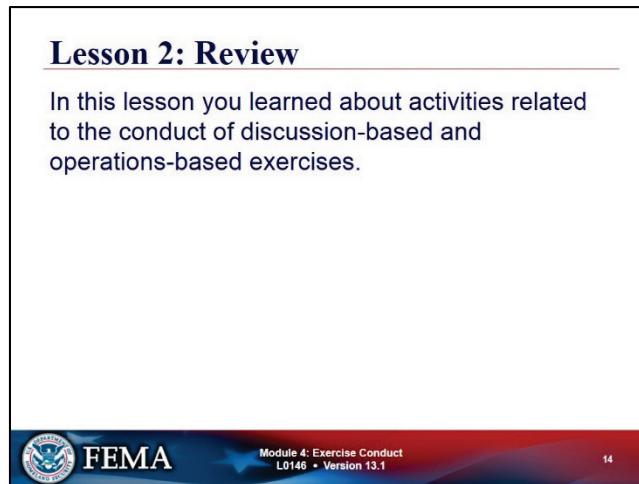
between the site controller(s) and the SimCell. Site controllers should advise the SimCell on the pace of exercise play, and request more or fewer injects as necessary to maintain an appropriate pace.

During FSEs and drills, the exercise assembly area controller plays a key role. The exercise assembly area controller remains in close communication with other controllers throughout the exercise to ensure safe and realistic deployment of personnel. When a unit arrives at the assembly area, the exercise assembly area controller takes attendance to ensure all players are present. Units are positioned according to their deployment times, and qualified individuals perform a weapons check to guarantee the tagging of all inspected weapons to indicate they are safe for exercise play.

This controller is also responsible for the exercise assembly area's logistical organization, including placement locations for units and coordination of exiting patterns for dispatched units. It is imperative for the exercise planning team to create a deployment timetable based on realistic response times; failure to do so will result in a compromised and disorganized exercise. The exercise assembly area controller must be informed about any updates to the exercise that may require changes to the deployment timetable, and he or she should update the deployment timetable accordingly.

In all operations-based exercises, it is critical that all exercise controllers take appropriate actions to ensure a safe and secure exercise environment. These actions may involve monitoring conditions that impact player and/or actor safety, such as heat stress and other health issues.

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Lesson 2: Review

In this lesson you learned about activities related to the conduct of discussion-based and operations-based exercises.

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Lesson 3: Exercise Wrap-Up Activities

Enabling Objective

After completing this lesson you should be able to describe the wrap-up activities that all relevant data is collected to support effective evaluation and improvement planning.

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Wrap-Up Activities

Performing thorough exercise wrap-up will ensure that all relevant data is collected to support effective evaluation and improvement planning.

Debriefings

Immediately following the exercise, a short debriefing should be conducted with exercise planning team members to ascertain their level of satisfaction with the exercise, discuss any issues or concerns, and

propose improvements. Planners should collect exercise attendance lists, provide copies to the exercise planning team leader, collect Participant Feedback Forms, and develop debriefing notes.

Player Hot Wash

A Hot Wash provides an opportunity for exercise participants to discuss exercise strengths and areas for improvement immediately following the conduct of an exercise. The Hot Wash should be led by an experienced facilitator who can ensure that the discussion remains brief and constructive. The information gathered during a Hot Wash can be used during the AAR/IP process, and exercise suggestions can be used to improve future exercises.

Hot Washes also provide opportunities to distribute Participant Feedback Forms which, when completed by players, can be used to help generate the AAR/IP.

For operations-based exercises, a Hot Wash should be conducted for each functional area by that functional area's controller or evaluator immediately following an exercise. It can also provide an opportunity for players to gain clarification on exercise play at other exercise sites or in other functional areas.

Controller/Evaluator Debriefing

The C/E Debriefing provides a forum for functional area controllers and evaluators to review the exercise. The exercise planning team leader facilitates this debriefing, which provides each controller and evaluator with an opportunity to provide an overview of the functional area they observed and to discuss both strengths and areas for improvement. During the debriefing, controllers and evaluators complete and submit their Participant Feedback Forms. Debriefing results are captured and may be included in the AAR/IP. Similarly, for discussion-based exercises, a Facilitator/Evaluator Debriefing is held to review exercise conduct. This debriefing can be facilitated by the exercise planning team leader and provides a forum for facilitators and evaluators to discuss strengths, areas for improvement, and progress in completing exercise objectives.

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Activity 6

Activity 6 *(Optional)*:
Discussion-based Exercises Lessons-Learned

Objective:
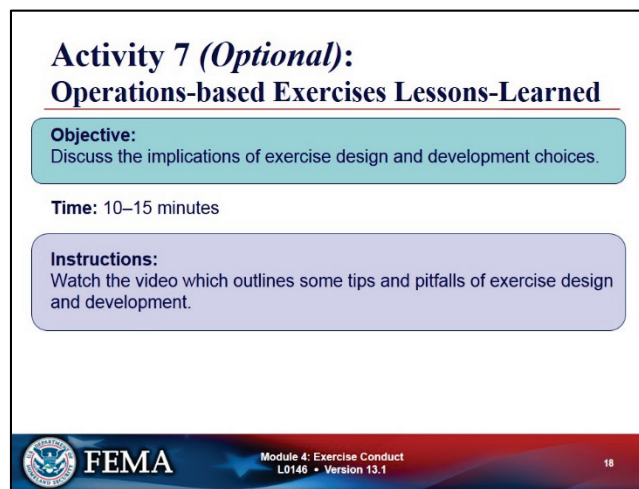Discuss the implications of exercise design and development choices.

Time: 10–15 minutes

Instructions:
Watch the video which outlines some tips and pitfalls of exercise design and development.

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Activity: Discussion-based Exercises Lessons Learned

Objective: Discuss implications of exercise design and development choices

Time Required: 10–15 minutes.

Instructions:
Following video viewing, participants should discuss what they noticed from observing the video that may point to corrective measures that could have been addressed during the design and development phase.

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Activity 7

Activity: Operations-based Exercises Lessons-Learned

Objective: Discuss the implications of exercise design and development choices on the exercise outcomes.

Time Required: 10–15 minutes.

Instructions:
Following video viewing, participants should discuss what they noticed from observing the video that may point to corrective measures that could have been addressed during the design and development phase.

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Lesson 3: Review

In this lesson we discussed exercise wrap-up activities including:

- Debriefings
- Player Hot Wash
- Controller/Evaluator Debrief
- Data collection for development of draft After Action Report (AAR).
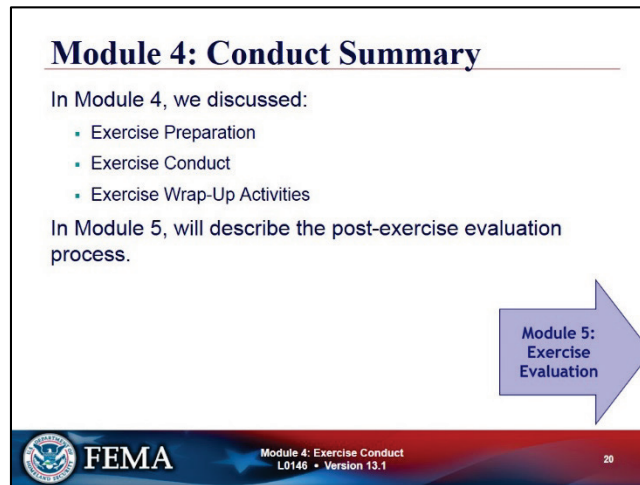
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Module 4: Exercise Conduct Summary

In Module 4, we discussed:

- Exercise Preparation
- Exercise Conduct
- Exercise Wrap-Up Activities.

In Module 5, we will describe the post-exercise evaluation process.

NOTES:

Acronyms

Acronym	Definition	First Appearance in Module
A/V	Audio/Visual	3
AAM	After-Action Meeting	6
AAR	After-Action Report	1
C&O	Concept and Objectives	3
C/E	Controller/Evaluator	3
COSIN	Control Staff Instructions	3
CPG	Comprehensive Preparedness Guide	2
DHS	Department of Homeland Security	1
EEGs	Exercise Evaluation Guides	1
EMI	Emergency Management Institute	1
EndEx	End of Exercise	4
EOC	Emergency Operations Center	2
EvalPlan	Evaluation Plan	3
ExPlan	Exercise Plan	3
FE	Functional Exercise	2
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	1
FPM	Final Planning Meeting	3
FSE	Full Scale Exercise	2
HazMat	Hazardous Materials	3
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program	1
ICS	Incident Command System	2
IP	Improvement Plan	1
IPM	Initial Planning Meeting	3
IT	Information Technology	2
MAA	Mutual Aid Agreement	2
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement	2
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding	1
MPM	Mid-Term Planning Meeting	3
MSEL	Master Scenario Events List	3
NEP	National Exercise Program	1
NIMS	National Incident Management System	3
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	3
NPD	National Preparedness Directorate	1
NPS	National Preparedness System	1
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration	3
POC	Point of Contact	3

Acronym	Definition	First Appearance in Module
PPD-8	Presidential Policy Directive 8	1
SAA	State Administrative Agency	1
SimCell	Simulation Cell	3
SitMan	Situation Manual	3
SMART	Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound	3
SME	Subject Matter Expert	3
SO	Incident Safety Officer	3
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures	1
StartEx	Start of Exercise	3
TEP	Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan	1
TEPW	Training and Exercise Planning Workshop	1
THIRA	Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	2
TTX	Tabletop Exercise	2
VIP	Very Important Person	3
XPAs	Extent of Play Agreements	1