

TEST, TRAINING, EXERCISE, AND EVALUATION PROGRAM

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Handbook establishes procedures for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Test, Training, Exercise, and Evaluation (TTE&E) Program.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS: This Handbook provides Department procedures and responsibilities for the TTE&E Program.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness (007), Office of Emergency Management is responsible for the content of this Handbook.

4. RELATED DIRECTIVES: VA Directive 0323, VA Continuity Program; VA Directive 0324, Test, Training, Exercise, and Evaluation Program

5. RESCISSION: None

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

a. This Handbook provides procedures for the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Test, Training, Exercise, and Evaluation Program (TTE&E). This program will assist in the preparation and validation of VA's ability to respond to, mitigate, and recover from an emergency as well as to perform Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEF) and Mission Essential Functions (MEF) during an emergency. The guidance within this Handbook incorporates internal and external requirements.

b. In accordance with Executive Order 13434 "National Security Professional Development," the VA TTE&E Program sets forth requirements and a framework that will enhance the Department's Emergency Management and Continuity abilities to assist in safeguarding our Nation.

2. BACKGROUND

a. Federal Continuity Directive (FCD) 1 directs all Federal Departments and Agencies (D/As) to establish and maintain a test, training, and exercise program.

b. The National Exercise Program (NEP), under the leadership of the Secretary of Homeland Security, is a mechanism for examining the preparation of the United States Government and its officers and other officials, and for adopting policy changes that might improve such preparations.

c. VA Administrations and Staff Offices (A/SO) collaborated to develop VA Directive 0324, TTE&E Program. This directive sets the foundation for VA's Test, Training, Exercise, and Evaluation Program. The VA TTE&E Program objective is to sustain a robust exercise, training and Evaluation program utilizing a comprehensive approach that includes a wide range of exercise scenarios including those involving Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Continuity of Government (COG).

d. The VA TTE&E Program integrates the requirements of the National Exercise Program into VA policies, plans, and programs. Additionally, it tests and validates these activities through training and exercises.

e. The TTE&E program is the primary vehicle for development of VA Multi-Year training and exercises.

f. Evaluation and improvement outcomes will be built into ongoing planning, training, and exercising efforts to ensure sustainability.

3. AUTHORITY

The established Directive and Handbook establishes Department-wide policy and responsibilities for the VA TTE&E Program, in accordance with National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 20, Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8) and the National Preparedness Goal's established interagency exercise and evaluation guidance under the NEP.

4. DEFINITIONS

a. VA Directive 0324 TTE&E Program is a component of the VA Comprehensive Emergency Management Program. This Directive establishes a sustainable, robust, and integrated TTE&E program utilizing an all-hazards emergency management approach.

b. The intent of the TTE&E Program is to enhance VA emergency management programs. This program will identify gaps and risks, develop training capabilities, and improve organizational coordination and communications. The program will also initiate discussions relative to VA policy, plans, and procedures that will improve preparedness and response efforts for all-hazard threats.

CHAPTER 2 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness

a. Ensures the Department has a viable TTE&E Program that meets Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and White House (WH) requirements as set forth in National Exercise Program guidance.

b. Ensures the development, dissemination and implementation of the VA TTE&E Program.

c. Provides policy oversight of the VA TTE&E Program.

d. Ensures adequate TTE&E resource allocation.

2. Director of Planning, Exercise, Training, and Evaluation (PETE) Service

a. Provides program oversight of the VA TTE&E program.

b. Ensures integrated exercise management strategy and implementation reflects VA priorities.

c. Ensures VA involvement in National Level Exercise (NLE) and Eagle Horizon (EH) planning and coordination, as well as required interagency exercises.

d. Has program responsibility for ensuring the development, maintenance and implementation of training policies and programs. Responsible for ensuring the development, maintenance and implementation of training policies and programs.

e. Ensures the development, coordination, review, and evaluation of all exercises and real world After Action Reports (AARs).

f. Develops and administers applicable Evaluation and Improvement plans.

g. Provides strategic guidance and policy direction and oversees planning, programming, budgeting, and execution of the VA TTE&E program

h. Ensures that a multi-year exercise schedule is developed and coordinated with VA A/SOs.

3. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials

a. Designates an individual (e.g., an Emergency Coordinator) and an alternate who can effectively represent the organization regarding exercise planning and development.

b. Ensures full organizational participation in all required Department level exercises.

c. Ensures full organizational participation in all required NEP exercises.

d. Ensures full organizational participation in all required interagency exercises.

e. Ensures compliance with emergency management educational requirements.

f. Ensures all organization level exercises are entered in Exercise Calendar.

g. Ensures organizational level AARs and Implementation Plans are provided to PETE.

h. Ensures active participation in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of the exercise activity for their organization.

4. Test, Training, Exercise, and Evaluation Program Manager

a. Provides program oversight of the VA TTE&E program.

b. Ensures integrated exercise management strategy and implementation reflect VA priorities.

c. Ensures VA's participation in NLE and EH planning and coordination gatherings, as appropriate.

d. Ensures VA performs exercises at regular intervals, in accordance with the NEP and FCD 1, throughout the year as depicted in **Table 1 (Page 10)**

e. Ensures VA has a valid Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to assist in documenting,

prioritizing, implementing, and resourcing all-hazard issues identified during TTE&E, assessments, and emergency operations.

f. Ensures the development, coordination, review, evaluation, and dissemination of all exercises and real world AARs and Improvement Plans.

g. Oversees planning, programming, budgeting, and execution of the VA TTE&E program.

h. Reviews and revises the Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan, annually, as appropriate, in coordination with VA A/SOs.

i. Participates in and conducts tests, as appropriate, to ensure viability of communications systems, in accordance with National Communications System's (NCS) Directive 3-10.

j. Assures exercises are compliant with established Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) national standards.

Table 1

Continuity TTE&E Requirements	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually	As Required
Test and validate equipment to ensure internal and external interoperability and viability of communications systems	✓			
Test alert, notification, and activation procedures for all continuity personnel	✓			
Test primary and backup infrastructure systems and services at continuity facilities	✓			
Conduct a yearly continuity exercise			✓	
Conduct a yearly Devolution Site Exercise			✓	
Test capabilities to perform MEFs			✓	
Test plans for recovering vital records, critical information systems, services, and data			✓	
Test and exercise of required physical security capabilities at continuity facilities			✓	
Test internal and external interdependencies with respect to performance of MEFs			✓	
Train continuity personnel on roles and responsibilities			✓	
Conduct continuity awareness briefings or orientation for the entire workforce			✓	
Train organization's leadership on PMEFs and MEFs			✓	

Continuity TTE&E Requirements	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually	As Required
Train personnel on all Reconstitution plans and procedures			✓	
Allow opportunity for continuity personnel to demonstrate familiarity with continuity plans and procedures and demonstrate organization's capability to continue essential functions			✓	
Conduct exercise that incorporates the deliberate and pre-planned movement of continuity personnel to continuity facilities			✓	
Conduct assessment of organization's continuity TTE&E programs and continuity plans and programs			✓	
Report findings of all annual assessments as directed to FEMA			✓	
Conduct successor training for all organization personnel who assume the authority and responsibility of the organization's leadership if that leadership is incapacitated or becomes otherwise unavailable during a continuity situation			✓	
Train on the identification, protection, and ready availability of electronic and hardcopy documents, references, records, information systems, and data management software and equipment needed to support essential functions during a continuity situation for all staff involved in the vital records program			✓	

Continuity TTE&E Requirements	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually	As Required
Test capabilities for protecting classified and unclassified vital records and for providing access to them from the continuity facility			✓	
Train on an organization's devolution option for continuity, addressing how the organization will identify and conduct its essential functions during an increased threat situation or in the aftermath of a catastrophic emergency			✓	
Conduct personnel briefings on continuity plans that involve using or relocating to continuity facilities, existing facilities, or virtual offices			✓	
Allow opportunity to demonstrate intra- and interagency continuity communications capability			✓	
Allow opportunity to demonstrate that backup data and records required for supporting essential functions at continuity facilities are sufficient, complete, and current			✓	
Allow opportunity for continuity personnel to demonstrate their familiarity with the reconstitution procedures to transition from a continuity environment to normal activities			✓	
Allow opportunity for continuity personnel to demonstrate their familiarity with agency devolution procedures			✓	

5. Lead, Emergency Management Trainer

a. Has program responsibility for ensuring the development, maintenance, and implementation of training programs.

6. Lead, Emergency Management Evaluator

a. Develops a Corrective Actions Program to assist in documenting, prioritizing, implementing, and resourcing all-hazard issues identified during TTE&E, assessments, and emergency operations.

CHAPTER 3 - CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. DEPARTMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

a. Exercise requirements for the Department have been developed to address key continuity initiatives, National contingency scenarios, emergency operations requirements and response/support to the Department of Defense (DoD) and other Federal agencies.

b. VA is mandated to participate in the annual Eagle Horizon (EH) contingency exercise and the annual National Level Exercise (NLE). Additional VA involvement in selected interagency exercises is possible.

c. VA will participate in the EH and NLE from a departmental level including the A/SOs and associated VA Emergency Relocation Group members and Emergency Coordinators. Specific participation requirements are outlined in the Training and Exercise Requirements matrix (Section 3.4.2 Exercise Requirements).

2. GUIDANCE

a. PETE is charged with all elements of planning, conduct and evaluation of the NLE and EH exercises. Additionally, PETE responsibilities include coordination, planning and involvement in interagency exercises that may have VA strategic, programmatic and/or planning implications.

b. A/SO exercises may be held independently or in conjunction with exercises planned and conducted at the National level. The latter option helps test the intergovernmental coordination needed in times of emergency. VA Central Office (VACO), A/SOs will benefit from the integration and affiliation that larger exercises encompass.

c. Exercise activities follow a progressive multi-year plan that is designed to meet agency objectives and abide by interagency requirements.

d. A/SOs and Emergency Coordinators members will participate and be involved in planning activities related to NLE and EH exercises, as well as interagency exercises where VA may be involved.

e. VA A/SOs assigned to an exercise will actively participate and support their role in the exercise.

f. The VA ERG and Emergency Coordinators assigned to an exercise will actively participate in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of the exercise activity for their organization.

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

a. The training program is designed to provide employees involved in emergency management and COOP functions with course offerings that will enhance individual/team knowledge and professional growth related to specific program areas. The program's goal is to improve emergency management competencies related to a broad spectrum of responsibilities and skills. Specific training requirements are outlined in the ERG Position Guide and Draft Implementation Plan.

b. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM), PETE is responsible for administering and monitoring the program. PETE is responsible for the development, maintenance and implementation of training policies and programs as they relate to emergency and incident management, homeland security, and COOP.

c. Training programs, requirements and schedules will be determined by PETE in coordination with OSP management and VA A/SOs that are part of the VA Integrated Operations Center (VA IOC). General emergency management training course offerings have been established for the VA ERG, Crisis Response Team (CRT) and COOP staff, the VA IOC, Emergency Coordinators, and others interested in gaining knowledge of the related emergency management topics. Program requirements will include those necessary to maintain proficiency in direct correlation with collateral and job related duties. The training methodology is consistent with the Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Management Institute (EMI). The training program is scalable and developed in modules that can be accomplished as the individual progresses in their knowledge of the field and desires to gain additional education.

d. The emergency management courses are tailored to a level that is necessary to afford participants the ability to function appropriately during any contingency situation. This training shall include a basic understanding of VA emergency response and COOP functions, the NRF, National Disaster Medical System (NDMS), and the NIMS/Incident Command Structure (ICS).

e. The goal is to promote a working knowledge of all operational skills and provide the tenets of emergency management along with knowledge of interagency and community-wide participation in planning, coordination, and management functions designed to improve VA emergency management capabilities.

f. Although a majority of these courses are available at no cost to the individual or organization, funding for travel to attend selective courses may be required. The availability of funding for either a course, certification and any cost associated with these should be considered by each A/SO.

g. The purpose of this program is to allow adaptation to requirements and changes within VA. The program consists of the following elements:

(1) FEMA Independent Study Courses – EMI offers more than fifty Independent Study Courses (ISCs). Through its courses and programs, EMI serves as the national standard for the development and delivery of Emergency Management Training. The majority of this program is based on FEMA Independent Study Program (ISP) course offerings. The ISP is a distance learning program offered free of charge to the public. It serves as both an alternate means to deliver valuable training to the professional and general emergency management community, and an opportunity to improve and promote disaster preparedness nationally. FEMA develops the courses and provides course completion certificates. It is possible to earn transferable academic credit for

completion of ISCs. ISP courses are evaluated and awarded Continuing Education Units (CEUs) in accordance with the standards established by the International Association of Continuing Education and Training (IACET). The program is open to all US residents. Most of the ICS materials are available for download, free of charge from the website: www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/

(2) EMI Campus Courses - Advanced on-campus courses offered at FEMA EMI in Emmitsburg, MD.

(3) OSP/PETE Offerings - Specific VA course offerings and educational forums will be developed through VA Learning University (VALU) to promote VA specific education requirements.

(4) Exercises and training - Participation in specific exercise and training events will supplement course work.

(5) Professional development - Activities include, but are not limited to the following:

- (a) Membership in related professional organizations
- (b) College courses
- (c) Attendance at training seminars/conference
- (d) Professional certifications
- (e) Mentoring
- (f) Contributions to the field (public speaking, publishing etc.)
- (g) Research

(6) Other roles and responsibilities of the **PETE** in relation to this program are as follows:

(a) Provide A/SOs assistance with emergency management training opportunities and guidance for their internal emergency management training programs.

(b) Locate and disseminate emergency management training opportunities.

- (c) Source and/or provide emergency management training sessions.
- (d) Track training for members of the VAIOC and the ERG.
- (e) Source training that would be helpful in resolving corrective action issues brought to light in the evaluation program.
- (f) Develop and manage MOUs regarding training.
- (g) Ensure that emergency management training contributes to the Department's goal of NIMS compliance.

4. EXERCISES

a. Exercises enable entities to identify strengths and incorporate them within best practices to sustain and enhance existing capabilities. They also provide an objective assessment of gaps and shortfalls within plans, policies, and procedures to address areas for improvement prior to a real-world incident. Exercises help clarify roles and responsibilities among different entities, improve interagency coordination and communications, and identify needed resources and opportunities for improvement.

b. Well-designed and well-executed exercises are the most effective means of:

- (1) Assessing and validating policies, plans, procedures, training, equipment, assumptions, and interagency agreements;
- (2) Clarifying roles and responsibilities;
- (3) Improving interagency coordination and communications;
- (4) Identifying gaps in resources;
- (5) Measuring performance; and
- (6) Identifying opportunities for improvement.

a. The testing, training, and exercising of continuity capabilities is essential to demonstrating, assessing, and improving an organization's ability to execute its continuity program, plans, and procedures. The testing of an organization's ability to

demonstrate continuity capabilities in the performance of essential functions enables leadership to establish clear goals for the organization. This periodic testing also ensures that resources and procedures are kept in a constant state of readiness.

b. Training familiarizes continuity personnel with their roles and responsibilities in support of the performance of an organization's essential functions during a continuity event. Training prepares continuity personnel to respond to all emergencies and disasters to ensure performance of the organization's essential functions. These include interdependencies both internal and external to the organization.

c. An organization's continuity exercise program focuses primarily on evaluating capabilities or an element of a capability, such as a plan or policy in a simulated situation. The NEP, under the leadership of the Secretary of DHS, is a mechanism for examining the preparation of the US Government and its officers and other officials, and also for adopting policy changes that might improve such preparations. The principal focus of the NEP is a series of exercises designed for heads of organizations and other key officials, which examines and evaluates emerging national-level policy issues. The NEP also addresses the coordination of exercise efforts. The NEP does not preclude or replace exercise programs conducted by individual organizations, but it allows and encourages organizations to align their exercise programs to United States government-wide priorities.

5. MANDATED NATIONAL EXERCISE PROGRAM EXERCISES:

a. **Eagle Horizon** – Mandatory, annual, integrated continuity exercise for all federal executive branch departments and agencies, as required by National Security Presidential Directive-51 Homeland Security Presidential Directive-20 (NSPD-51/HSPD-20), National Continuity Policy, and the National Continuity Policy Implementation Plan (NCPIP). These exercises involve activation of VA continuity sites and deployment of the ERG; and often the DERG and RERG.

b. **Devolution Exercise** – OSP in conjunction with the Devolution Site and the A/SOs representatives who comprise the Devolution Emergency Relocation Group (DERG) will conduct an annual Devolution exercise. This exercise is often an element of the EH continuity exercise. The following actions will be taken to ensure functionality of the devolution site and assure that all DERG personnel are able to execute VA's Devolution of Operations Plan (DOP):

- (1) OSP, PETE will provide an annual DOP briefing to all VA ERG and DERG personnel;
- (2) Annual testing of active and passive VA DOP activation mechanisms;
- (3) Annual training for the DERG members on their respective responsibilities and the requirements necessary to attain full operational capability, and
- (4) Annual testing and exercising of the VA DOP to ensure the ability to perform essential functions and operations from the Devolution of Operations site.

c. **Reconstitution Planning Site Exercise** – PETE in conjunction with the A/SO representatives who make up the Reconstitution Emergency Relocation Group (RERG) Planning Team will conduct an annual exercise. This exercise is often an element of the EH continuity exercise. The exercise purpose is to ensure functionality of the site and assure that all designated personnel are able to execute their reconstitution planning/continuity responsibilities:

- (1) Annual testing of the activation mechanisms;
- (2) Annual training for RERG members on respective reconstitution/continuity responsibilities and the requirements necessary to attain full operational capability;
- (3) Annual testing and exercising of the RERG team to ensure the ability to perform essential functions and reconstitute VACO.

d. National Level Exercise (NLE)/Principal Level Exercises (PLEs)/Senior Officials Exercises (SOEs)

(1) Participation at the VACO level in the annual NLE is mandatory for all VA ERG, CRT members, OSP and A/SOs. The NLE event requires senior level participation among the federal interagency community. VA participates in all NLE exercises.

(2) PETE is responsible for the Department planning and coordination in support of the Principal Level Exercises (PLEs) and Senior Officials Exercises (SOEs). These are policy level exercises that only require involvement at the VA Deputy Secretary and/or Assistant Secretary, OSP level.

(3) VA supports DoD Federal Coordinating Center (FCC) patient movement exercises. As such, VA may choose to participate in scheduled DOD patient movement exercises.

6. VA EXERCISE REQUIREMENTS

VA Training and Exercise Requirements

	VA Minimum Exercise Requirements
VA A/SOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual participation in NLE and EH exercises. • Provide information and support to PLE exercises • Provide general continuity awareness training to each employee on a yearly basis. • Participate in ICS training • Participate in joint agency exercises (when applicable) • Participate in all alert and notification exercises/drills • Participate in alert and notification tests • Internal organization exercises (as required or mandated) • Provide AAR feedback • Participate in exercise planning meetings • Develop exercise plans, as applicable (to external and internal exercises) • Provide input into the Exercise Calendar concerning organizational exercise dates • Budget for exercises (as needed) • Conduct internal continuity exercises, as required
VA ERG/RERG/CRT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in all Continuity/Continuity of Government (COG) exercises. • Participate in NLE • Participate in Reconstitution exercises (RERG and Site B IOC) • Participate in National Level interagency exercises. • Participate in Department Level continuity exercises • ICS training • Participate in joint agency exercises (when applicable) • Participate in all alert and notification exercises/drills • Participate in alert and notification tests
VA DERG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in annual Devolution exercise • Participate in NLE • Participate in all alert and notification exercises/drills • Participate in alert and notification tests • Participate in joint agency exercises (when applicable) • ICS training

7. EXERCISE CALENDAR

- a. PETE is responsible for keeping an updated Five Year Exercise Calendar. The calendar will be updated each quarter and distributed to VA A/SOs.
- b. Each A/SO is responsible for the development of individual organizational exercise calendars and providing PETE with updated exercise event information.
- c. National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) System – PETE is responsible for the input of exercises in the NEXS system. Each A/SO is requested to provide PETE with exercise information to be included into NEXS.

8. BUDGET

- a. OSP is responsible for budgeting for the NLE and EH exercises and the overall associated expenses. Individual organizations must plan for overtime, travel, lodging and other related expenses.
- b. A/SOs are responsible for expenses incurred in relation to their specific internal exercises.

9. EVALUATION AND CORRECTIVE ACTION PROGRAM (CAP)

- a. PETE has developed a CAP program to assist in documenting, prioritizing, and resourcing continuity issues identified during continuity TTE&E activities, assessments, and emergency operations. The VA CAP incorporates evaluations, AARs, and lessons learned from a cycle of events into the development and implementation of its program.
- b. VA's continuity CAP:
 - (1) Identifies continuity deficiencies and other areas requiring improvement.
 - (2) Provides responsibilities and a timeline for corrective action.
 - (3) Identifies and incorporates efficient acquisition processes and, where appropriate, collects all interagency requirements into one action.
 - (4) Identifies continuity personnel requirements for organization leadership and their supporting Human Resources Offices and OPM, where appropriate.

- c. The exercise evaluation process aim is to identify systemic weaknesses and suggest corrective actions that will enhance and refine agency preparedness. A comprehensive debriefing and AAR will be completed following a Departmental level (VACO) exercise.
- d. Each Administration will be responsible for its Administration's AAR program, which should be detailed in its respective Administration Handbooks and annexes. All data collected will be incorporated into an AAR that provides input for revisions and updates to emergency plans. After action findings will be included as part of an overall monitoring and evaluation program, administered by PETE.
- e. The lessons learned will be converted into improvements of concepts, procedures, processes, training, and systems. The next major exercise will then be planned by implementing the identified improvements. As part of the objectives of a future exercise, PETE will always check the progress made since the last exercise. The evaluation of the results of an exercise will usually require several months, especially for interagency exercises.

REFERENCES

- a. Executive Order 12656 Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities, dated November 18, 1988, as amended.
- b. Federal Continuity Directive 1 (FCD 1), Federal Executive Branch National Continuity Program and Requirements, February 2008.
- c. Homeland Security Act of 2002, PL 107-296, 6 U.S.C.101-557, November 25, 2002.
- d. Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP), February 2007.
- e. Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5, February 28, 2003.
- f. National Communications System Directive 3-10, Minimum Requirements for Continuity Communications Capabilities, July 25, 2007. (Classified Document)
- g. National Exercise Program (NEP), March 18, 2011.
- h. National Incident Management System (NIMS), December 2008.
- i. National Preparedness Guidelines, September 2007.
- j. National Response Framework, January 2008.
- k. National Security Presidential Directive-51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive-20, National Continuity Policy, May 9, 2007.
- l. Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8), March 30, 2011.