



Swedish Civil
Contingencies
Agency

HANDBOOK

Evaluation of Exercises



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This handbook is produced as a tool for the evaluation of the Barents Rescue exercise in Sweden in September 2011.

Evaluation of Exercises

Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency

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Foreword

We train and exercise in order to develop our ability to handle emergencies and crises, both individual organisations and public authorities. Qualitative methods of evaluation increase opportunities for identifying and utilising the lessons learned in exercises.

It is important to see evaluation as an integral part of an exercise. Well-conducted, effective evaluation provides better conditions for the participating organisation to develop. Therefore, evaluation planning and feedback must be a part of the exercise planning process right from the beginning.

When conducting more large-scale collaboration exercises, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) has a special responsibility to assess various aspects of society's joint crisis management capability. Each organisation has to self-assess and evaluate its own crisis management capability and this handbook has been written primarily as an aid in this process.

The handbook of evaluation primarily targets professionals and practitioners within authorities, municipalities or organisations, who already possess a good level of knowledge about training operations in general. The handbook is part of MSB's support of methods aimed at developing actors' ability to conduct and evaluate exercises independently. In the same context, a further significant publication is the Handbook of Exercises – Planning, Implementation and Feedback (KBM, 2006).

This handbook was originally produced for the Swedish Emergency Management Agency by analysts, Edward Deverell and Jesper Grönvall, at Crismart, the National Centre for Crisis Management Research and Training at the Swedish National Defence College. The handbook was revised by MSB in 2009, developing, for example, sections on how to draw up criteria and questions and disseminate lessons learned.

It is my hope that this handbook will contribute towards the development of understanding and awareness of the importance of well-conducted evaluations. Moreover, it will serve as a foundation for courses and training in exercise evaluation and thus contribute towards developing common methodology, strengthening collaboration between societal actors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helena Lindberg'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Helena Lindberg

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Summary

This handbook describes how a staff and decision exercise, oriented towards crisis management may be evaluated. The evaluation will cover both the behaviour of the exercise participants and the impact of the chosen exercise format on outcome. Conducting an exercise is really just a part of the process of improving personal and organisational skills. It is through evaluation and feedback that knowledge and learning from past experience or lessons learned become tangible and useful.

People who work on a strategic level are the primary target group for the type of exercise discussed in the handbook. Strategic work within crisis management may be described first and foremost as non-structured operations. This means that the work of analysing the behaviour of exercise participants in the exercise is often more challenging because there are no fixed or pre-determined instruments in place for measuring how a crisis is handled, but only the more general guiding principles for what defines good crisis management, effective crisis leadership skills or good decision-making procedures.

The handbook presents an evaluation process consisting of eight stages:

1. Appoint a head of evaluation.
2. Plan and organise evaluation in cooperation with exercise management.
3. Formulate evaluation questions and determine the basis for analysis.
4. Train evaluators.
5. Observe the exercise and conduct direct feedback.
6. Analyse the material collected and compile the evaluation report.
7. Present and disseminate the evaluation results and findings.
8. Utilise lessons learned and start planning the next exercise initiative.

MSB cannot emphasise enough the importance of clearly specifying and communicating the exercise purpose and objectives to those involved. Lack of clarity in the setting of purpose and objectives for an exercise may not only reduce the quality of its execution, but also result in evaluation that is vague and of little benefit. Exercise and evaluation planning are parallel processes as the one impacts the other; the handbook describes this in detail.

It is essential to improve the evaluation of exercises as these operations are an area of priority and the number of exercises will most likely increase in the future, as stipulated in the government bill: "Stronger Emergency Preparedness - for Safety's Sake".

Joint exercises and training are crucial in order to ensure effective crisis management across sectors/ ... / Exercises must be conducted, followed up and evaluated. The government considers education and training to be a central part of operations which must be conducted so that societal emergency preparedness may continue to develop. These operations are a vital tool for addressing the need for knowledge and skills as risks change and new threats emerge." (Government Bill 2007/08:92).

Lessons learned from past events and experience created by an exercise must be utilised effectively through systematic evaluation. The handbook offers readers a range of practical advice on how an evaluation may be conducted. For example:

- Plan the evaluation and the exercise at the same time. An evaluation is an essential part of the entire cycle of the exercise process rather than serving merely as the final step. Evaluation is important because it affects, and is itself in turn affected by, all other components of an exercise.
- Formulate a clear purpose and objectives for the exercise. This is a prerequisite for effective evaluation. If the purpose/objectives of an exercise are at all vague or ambiguous, however, the evaluation findings will most likely be vague and unclear as well.
- Involve management – this sends a signal throughout the entire organisation that exercises are to be taken seriously by everyone. Management participation in the exercise is just as important as that of other members of the organisation. Management is also a recipient and user of an exercise evaluation.

- In exercises of short duration, the 50–50-rule should be applied, half the time for the exercise and half the time for discussion, feedback and reflection on events and experiences during the exercise. Sufficient time must be set aside for this so that the individual may develop deeper awareness and understanding of what he or she has experienced during the exercise and not risk losing this opportunity.
- Use time and resources in order to identify and establish contact with recipients of the exercise evaluation. This makes it easier to understand what information they consider relevant and how they would like information packaged and presented.
- Remember that the evaluation should consider participants' experience of exercises, training and exercise routine in relation to how this is evaluated. Favourable aspects of behaviour as well as those less favourable should always be taken up in order to give a balanced view of conduct.
- Appoint a work group to follow the exercise process and subsequently ensure that lessons learned from an exercise are implemented within the organisation.
- Include people who usually prepare and conduct evaluations and make observations as regular participants in the exercises. This may provide them with inspiration and the opportunity to assimilate new experiences.
- Disseminate evaluation results further to other departments and organisations, which may very well benefit from these findings. They also have significance for society at large as such work may support the development of standards and guiding principles for good crisis management

It is our hope that this handbook will provide practical tools for evaluating staff and decision exercises oriented towards emergency management, but also for other types of exercises. In addition, MSB would strongly encourage readers of this handbook to read the authority's exercise handbook, since the exercise and evaluation activities are closely connected.

Introduction

1. Introduction

It is important that evaluation be allocated the resources it demands and deserves if education and training efforts are to be of benefit. Conducting an exercise is merely the beginning of a process. It is through evaluation and feedback that lessons learned and experiences during the exercise become tangible and useful.

A crisis may subject all the members of an organisation to a severe ordeal. Decisions must be made under extremely difficult circumstances, which may include threats against values, grave insecurity and pressure of time. These decisions will certainly have consequences for human life, health and property while the choices made at various stages will affect an organisation's reputation and legitimacy. Additionally, in a broader sense, society may well be affected by economic consequences as well as a lack of confidence in its ability to handle difficult situations. Exercises and planning for crisis management are aimed at creating extreme and highly stressful conditions for participants so that they may practise:

- making crucial decisions
- ensuring that decisions are followed and implemented
- ensuring that information is communicated to the right people

A staff and decision exercise directed towards crisis management is intended to enhance individual and organisational capacities to manage a difficult situation. It shall be implemented in such a way that is systematic and carefully prepared.

While it is obviously not possible to foresee everything that may occur during a crisis, the exercises provide a structure and create a basis for avoiding errors. Flexibility and creativity are key attributes, in particular, for leaders in crisis management when handling complex situations. Participation in various educational and training programmes improves the capacity for managing a crisis more effectively and with better coordination.

Exercises and training are also an important complement to the experience accumulated by individuals in their daily operations, who have to be able to deal with potentially long periods of time between crises. Consequently, educational and exercise initiatives must be run in order to enhance and/or maintain the ability to handle a crisis. In addition, findings from exercises and evaluation will identify knowledge gaps and deficiencies in information resources. Good decision and information processes, effective crisis plans and functions may be established in the organisation while those that are less effective may be modified or simply removed. During the course of an exercise, it becomes apparent which resources are in short supply or simply deficient, and whether existing resources are used optimally.

Mistakes may also be made during an exercise without ramification or consequence, which is an obvious advantage in contrast with mistakes being made during a real-life incident. Above all, exercises shall be seen as an opportunity for an organisation to change before, rather than after a crisis.

However, if the exercise is to provide such benefits it must be evaluated and lessons learned from past experience must be properly utilised and applied. This is no easy task but one that requires knowledge, integrity, respect for exercise participants, stamina and the courage to convey and communicate lessons learned in order to be able to manage crises more efficiently. MSB hopes that this handbook will provide practical tools to those in charge of the vital evaluation of exercises.



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Samverkans- och kärnkraftsövning 2011

SAMÖ-KKÖ
2011



SAMÖ
2007

Utvärdering av
Samverkansövning

... alla?

... arbete
... beredskap

... mellan offer
... livet vid kris
... 1993

Evaluating crisis management exercises

2. Evaluating crisis management exercises

This handbook proposes methods and approaches when evaluating organisations in staff and decision exercises oriented towards crisis management. It also describes how the chosen exercise format may affect the outcome. The material has been developed using evaluation literature as a starting point and practical experience gained from evaluating crisis management exercises.

After the conclusion of an exercise, there is a risk of complacency setting in and of work being considered complete. Those who have worked diligently with exercise planning may wish to indulge in some free time while active participants in the exercise may also be in need of reflection and downtime. Despite these inclinations however, it is now that the actual learning phase begins.

After the exercise, there must be time to take a step back and reflect on what has gone well and what has not. What are the ways and means by which improvements might be made?

2.1 What is an evaluation?

An evaluation reviews initiatives, operations and action, for example, in order to ensure and maintain or improve their quality. With this definition in mind, it is clear that all organisations should conduct evaluations.

MSB has chosen to define evaluation as follows:

Evaluation within MSB's operations constitutes the systematic and transparent assessment of implementation and impact of the measures adopted in order to strengthen societal protection and preparedness against emergencies and crises.

This handbook focuses on how the evaluator examines and assesses a staff and decision exercise oriented towards crisis management, in particular how the participants act and the organisation functions.

2.2 Goal-based evaluation

MSB has chosen goal-based evaluation as its focus for this handbook because staff and decision exercises are the main concern, and they are usually conducted during a short period of time. The goal of evaluation is determined by the various types of questions for which the exercise is to provide answers.

Goal-based evaluation is the most usual kind of evaluations. It measures the extent to which certain predetermined objectives have been achieved and is largely concerned with the projected benefits and results of an exercise. A goal-based evaluation is therefore about comparing observations of the exercise's results with its purpose and objectives.

Ideally, it is initiated by describing the exercise's purpose and objectives. The objectives are then measured or compared against the description of reality, that is, the implementation of and results from the exercise.

Overall, an evaluation of a staff and decision exercise within the field of crisis management should relate to both the efforts of exercise participants as well as how set-up and implementation has impacted opportunities for achieving exercise objectives.

2.3 Target group

There are different target groups for exercises. A rough division can be made between the strategic and operational level. This document focuses on the strategic level, or more specifically, staff and decision exercises for people working on a strategic level. This affects how evaluation should be structured as there are fixed and general criteria for what defines good crisis management and good decision-making procedures on a strategic level. Consequently, general guiding principles constitute the point of departure, which often makes the task of analysing the conduct of exercise participants more challenging. This issue will be discussed later on in the handbook.

The strategic level of crisis management, which of course exists within operational organisations, may chiefly be described as non-structured operations. Difficult situations or crises at the strategic level often require creative and flexible decision-making

as there is not merely one solution for a situation, but several. It is the situation itself that determines the solution chosen or the result that occurs and the individuals and the organisation that are involved.

The operational level consists primarily of group operations in the field, for example, what is referred to as “blue light” organisations or specialist groups such as medical personnel. Operational exercises are directed more towards a particular competence and towards different procedures, for example, the best methods of extinguishing chemical fires or the safest way to perform a complex medical procedure.

2.4 Learning prerequisites

First and foremost, it must be understood by those planning an exercise and accompanying evaluation that the participants may feel vulnerable, scrutinised and (overly) judged. Consequently, an exercise shall be based on respect for participants and maintain good morale. Otherwise, there is a risk that few will wish to participate in the exercise or that those who do disguise their abilities in some way.

An exercise shall be seen as a step in the process of becoming an even better operator, both as individuals and as an organisation. An exercise is chiefly for the participants, not the evaluator.

There must also be a readiness to handle heightened emotions during or after an exercise. It is not uncommon for conflicts to arise in extreme situations when exercise facilitators often try to influence the participants emotionally by instilling uncertainty and stress. Nevertheless, an exercise is not intended to cause low morale or make participants feel vulnerable afterwards.

2.4.1 Explain the exercise carefully

The various tasks assigned to participants, exercise management and evaluator should be explained thoroughly in order to create mutual understanding among the three groups for their respective assignments. Below is a line of reasoning with a number of points that are important to keep in mind as evaluator (linked to the exercise planning).

1. Explain the benefits for individuals and the organisation as a result of the exercise and evaluation.
2. Involve participants at an early stage by asking them to specify the information/knowledge they need and the areas where they see a need for improvement.
3. Begin the exercise from a position of shared knowledge and information.

Various types of training activities should ideally be implemented before an exercise which build, prepare or update the skills necessary. Naturally, people are used to different training and exercise routines, and have varying levels of practical experience. Participants should feel secure in a learning context so that they may more easily absorb knowledge. They should not be embarrassed or patronised in front of colleagues or managers by, for example, having their weaknesses or lack of certain areas of knowledge exposed.

It is important to highlight the fact that individual participants will not be singled out in any way during either the exercise or the evaluation. An evaluator may describe or state possible weaknesses and shortcomings in terms of processes or functions rather than point out individual behaviour or actions. If there are any particularly illuminating individual examples (both positive and negative), the participants concerned may be asked if they would agree to be named in the evaluation.

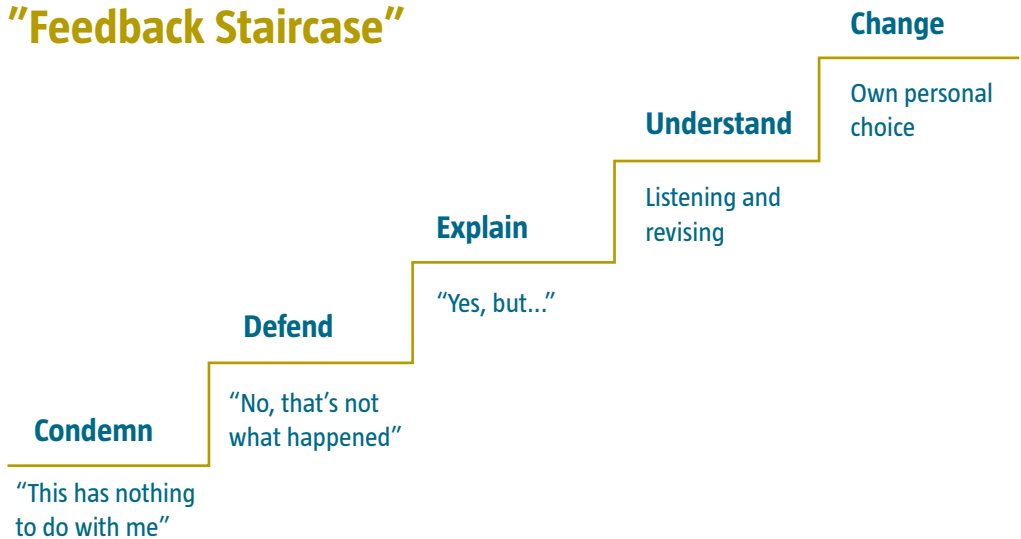
In this context, it is important to be aware that concealing individuals behind functions may be difficult. It may not always be possible either to guarantee that no individual participant will feel exposed in an evaluation. Ultimately, it is often very clear to those working in an organisation who handles what.

4. Explain how the evaluation is to be used.
5. Highlight why it is important to conduct an exercise and how the purpose and objectives have been chosen.
6. Create good morale and rapport among participants so that they may be able to, and wish to, assimilate experience from an exercise.

Participants are inclined to become defensive during and after an exercise where they had to handle a problematic or challenging situation. A successful exercise (and its evaluation) compels participants to want to acquire and understand new knowledge, and if necessary change individual or organisational behaviour, so that the organisation might become even better at handling difficult situations.

As shown by the feedback staircase below, the goal of an exercise and evaluation is to enable the participants to reach the highest step of the staircase. It is MSB's ambition that the handbook shall offer practical tools for the purpose of achieving that goal.

"Feedback Staircase"





2.5 Involve Management

Commitment and interest must be shown by management in order to bring about change in an organisation. Such engagement also signals to the organisation that exercises are to be taken seriously and regarded as a strategic tool for improving (or changing) the organisation.

In recent years awareness of the need and benefits of crisis management skills has increased in society. It may be difficult, nevertheless, for managerial organisations to devote the time and resources required in terms of personnel, financial and symbolic support in order to conduct a successful training, exercise and evaluation programme. Even so, it is essential to take the task seriously and not risk exercises becoming merely a symbolic ritual, which does no more than legitimate exercise activities once a year.

Components of an Evaluation

3. Components of an Evaluation

While this handbook does not discuss exercise planning, the writing of scenarios and implementation of an exercise in depth, these aspects are highlighted in MSB's exercise handbook.

The exercise and evaluation should be planned in parallel with each other.

The evaluation is a significant part of the entire exercise process, and not merely to be implemented at the final stage. It is also important here to understand that the evaluation is affected by, and affects, all the other components of an exercise.

Evaluations of staff and decision exercises have two different, yet connected components which are discussed in this handbook:

1. Evaluation of exercise participants' organisation and action/behaviour during the exercise
2. Evaluation of the exercise format

There are several key questions in the evaluation relating to how exercise planning and the chosen exercise format affected the outcome. The following question themes are important:

- Planning and work process: how was the process of planning and implementing the exercise established in the organisation by those responsible for these tasks as well as evaluation of the exercise?
- Allocation of responsibility and mandate: was collaboration successful between the client on the one hand, and the exercise and head of evaluation on the other?

n sex procent av totala
mark med omkring 100 000
2006. Samtidigt



er ej angiven i en tredjedel av be-
läst med föregående år. De största
och eldning av annat ägande, och
för nästan sex procent av hänsyn
till bränder som orsakats av

bränder i skog och mark. Den största delen av skog och mark som brändes i 2006 berodde på eldning i skog och mark som orsakats av mänsklig aktivitet. Den största delen av skog och mark som brändes i 2006 berodde på eldning i skog och mark som orsakats av mänsklig aktivitet. Den största delen av skog och mark som brändes i 2006 berodde på eldning i skog och mark som orsakats av mänsklig aktivitet.

Närmare hälften av insatserna i skog och mark under 2006 gjordes av förhållandevis liten andel i produktionssektorn. Samtidigt stiger fjärdelen av insatserna i skog och mark som orsakats av mänsklig aktivitet för tredje året i rad.



- Methodology and structure: what methodology was chosen for conducting the exercise? To what extent did the chosen structure and implementation of the exercise contribute to achieving exercise objectives? How and to what extent did the exercise's structure and its execution impact benefits to participants? Did the chosen structure enhance participants' chances of achieving exercise objectives?

These types of questions should be asked of everyone involved in creating and conducting an exercise. Findings will be of great significance when the next exercise is to be planned and implemented.

Stages of the evaluation process

4. Stages of the evaluation process

The stages in the evaluation process will be described in detail in the following chapter:

1. Appoint a head of evaluation.
2. Plan and organise the evaluation in collaboration with exercise management.
3. Formulate the evaluation questions and basis for analysis.
4. Train the evaluators.
5. Observe the exercise and conduct a direct feedback session.
6. Analyse collected material and compile evaluation report.
7. Present and disseminate evaluation findings.
8. Utilise lessons learned and begin planning the next exercise.

4.1 Appoint a head of evaluation

Evaluating an exercise in a systematic manner is no easy task. An evaluation moderator must be appointed as early on as possible in the exercise planning process. Depending on the scope of the exercise, several people may be needed to carry out the evaluation. Moderators and other potential evaluators then participate in planning the exercise and evaluation.

The following functions should be involved in different capacities in the exercise and evaluation planning:

- client (may be several persons and/or bodies)
- project manager
- exercise director
- support functions for exercise director
- internal and external subject experts
- head of evaluation and evaluator
- observers
- users of exercise results

Several of these functions may be held by one and the same person depending on the form and scope of the exercises.

An excellent way of involving these functions over time is to form a reference group, in which all the various elements may interact and integrate with one another, to be led by the project manager. This ensures that everyone understands and can explain their role. The reference group also enables the aims, objectives and format of the exercise to be drawn up and determined in collaboration, which is preferable for evaluation.

The reference group is also highly valuable for potential external parties involved in exercise planning, conducting, or evaluation, who may acquire relevant and up-to-date information through this group on the exercise as well as the organisation participating in it.

4.1.1 Internal or external evaluator?

An evaluation shall be independent and provide answers that are as objective as possible to the questions that the exercise is designed to address. Consequently, MSB recommends appointing an external evaluator to be in charge of evaluations, to be assisted by a deputy-evaluation leader, appointed internally.

Many exercises are hampered by constraints on resources such as time and people, which may result in a reluctance to hire an external evaluator. In such case, consideration should be given to the factors mentioned below.

The purpose of an exercise is directed towards enhancing knowledge and ability. An exercise will, however, almost always point out shortcomings in capacity and gaps in knowledge. An evaluator may be placed in a difficult situation if the conclusion is that there are deficiencies in an organisation or a functional ability. This is especially true for internal evaluators.

Common problems with internal evaluators are that they may have ties to, for example, a crisis plan under evaluation or feel exposed and fear for the security of their positions should the

evaluation be unfavourable. This may then make it difficult for an internal evaluator to render an objective assessment of the outcome.

Another important argument for choosing an external evaluator is that the internal evaluator may tend to gloss over mistakes and refrain from criticising co-workers, organisational structures and organisational culture.

However, the use of an external evaluator may also result in a sensitive situation, not least in the case of exercises on crisis management, which have a strong connection to strategic issues or other types of closely guarded information within an agency.

An evaluation also requires that the evaluator has a good insight into an organisation's culture, norms, past experience, governance and ordinances. In this respect, an internal deputy evaluator with a sound understanding of the organisation and the issues to be evaluated provides a distinct advantage.

A further benefit is that, in contrast with the external evaluator, an internal deputy evaluation leader will still be available when the exercise is complete and the evaluation findings and lessons learned from the exercise are to be utilised and implemented.

MSB recommends using an external evaluator, assisted by an internal evaluator. This affords the best opportunities for objectivity in the evaluation. Potential conflicts may then be detected by the internal evaluator and successfully averted. In addition, the internal evaluator may assist the external evaluator in the collection of information, facilitating this responsibility.

The process of designing, implementing and disseminating an evaluation places considerable demands on an evaluator. Practice and experience of exercises is required in order to implement each step of the evaluation process in the best manner possible as well as knowledge of staff and decision-making processes within crisis management. It is also important to be able to write a user-friendly evaluation and have a good ability to communicate lessons learned from an exercise.

All in all, a great deal is demanded of an evaluator. At the same time, it is of course unreasonable to expect that he or she should be an exercise specialist as well as an expert in the fields of education, law, behavioural science, political science, crisis management, psychology, journalism, communication, and so forth. Nevertheless, it is clearly apparent that there is a considerable need to cooperate when developing, implementing and evaluating exercises. Often, there are also skilled people within an organisation who can support the evaluation function with an expertise not possessed by the evaluator him/herself, resulting in heightened interest in the exercises and their outcome as more people gain insight into the exercise and evaluation activities.

4.2 Cooperating with exercise management to plan and organise evaluation

As previously mentioned, planning the exercise and evaluation in parallel is essential because the one has a substantial influence on the other. The aims and objectives of the exercise must be clearly formulated and understood by the persons involved. This is especially significant in view of the following:

- The exercise format, that is how an exercise shall be conducted, determines how the evaluation function may best observe and respond to the purpose and objectives of the exercise.
- It must be possible to observe, analyse and evaluate the issues brought to the fore by the exercise and scenario both in practical and theoretical terms. It is vital that the evaluation function assesses whether it is practical to respond to these issues with the resources available and with the conditions provided by the selected exercise format.

Another issue is whether knowledge and experience is sufficient in order to be able to theoretically analyse, rate, and thus evaluate the behaviour of exercise participants. In other words, a process of simultaneous development between exercise management and evaluators is not only to be preferred but is an absolute necessity.

MSB would also like to stress the need to firmly establish the idea of simultaneous development of an exercise with the client so that the client understands why the process should be managed in a certain way.

There are certain types of objectives which should provide the central focus of an exercise separately or in combination:

- investigative (exploratory)
- needs-oriented (diagnostic)
- process-oriented
- results/outcome-oriented.

Below are a few general examples of possible orientations for exercise objectives:

- raise level of knowledge within one or several specific subject areas
- find gaps in knowledge
- test new structures, functions, routines and forms of decision-making
- examine needs and use of resources
- provide the opportunity to discuss different future scenarios which an organisation might face.

Examples of aims and objectives for an investigative crisis management exercise

The purpose of the crisis management exercise and related experience feedback session is to discuss how the participants' ability to handle sudden and complex crises can be ensured or enhanced.

There is also an opportunity for the organisation's work group to report and give feedback on the results to date, generated from its efforts in order to develop a contingency plan. The occasion is however seen primarily as an opportunity for management to communicate their experiences and ideas for further work on completing an emergency preparedness plan.

The aim of this exercise is to clarify the following points:

- What functions are necessary in a crisis group?
- How should responsibilities be allocated and how can responsibility be delegated, and withdrawn?
- How may the ability to communicate (web-based, switchboard and so forth) towards various target groups be maintained in a crisis?
- What is the division of responsibilities between authorities, and which authority should lead efforts during a crisis?
- What expectations are there on the organisation's ability?
- What might be the consequences in the short, medium and long term for the organisation's ability to function?
- What measures need to be taken? Who makes these decisions?
- What information is needed so that the body's assignments within its sphere of responsibility may be performed? Who possesses the necessary information? Who are the recipients of information from the body? How might such information be communicated?
- Using discussion and the related experience feedback as a basis, management shall be able to convey and communicate their experiences and direct continued efforts in developing a emergency preparedness plan.
- Who does the organisation need to collaborate and coordinate with internally and externally? How may such collaboration be established and maintained?
- What resources / reinforcements may be needed in order to maintain essential operations over time? How may, shall, these reinforcements to resources benefit the organisation?

Using the discussion and related experience feedback as a basis, management shall be able to convey their experiences and focus future work on developing an emergency preparedness plan.

4.2.1 Methodology and format for conducting the exercise

How should the exercise be conducted? In other words, which methodology and which format shall be used in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the exercises?

There are several variations on how exercises may be implemented. Seminar exercises (table top) and simulation exercises, that is, games with opponents, are most relevant for the type of evaluation discussed in this handbook - staff and decision-making exercises on a strategic level. The main difference between these two exercise forms is the degree of interactivity between exercise participants and exercise management (for a more detailed discussion on various exercise forms, see the MSB exercise handbook).

- Seminar exercises (table top): The simplest exercise form is the seminar exercise: the exercise facilitator leads discussions with participants on a particular set of issues or scenario. A seminar exercise can be simplified if it concerns training of a limited area or task. This means fewer participants, reduced time spent and fewer costs, at the same time as there is less of an impact on daily operations than with more advanced exercise forms. In addition, the seminar exercise often does not demand large-scale physical or material preparations. Another benefit is that exercise participants are given the opportunity to explore the various issues in-depth. Anyone can react to what happens, offer comments, ask questions and raise objections.

The seminar exercise may place considerable demands on the moderator, or the person leading the exercise. The greater the complexities of the problems targeted by the exercise, the heavier the demands are on the moderator's competence within the relevant areas.

The description of the situation can either be given as a whole or even in stages where an emergency situation gradually becomes more complex or changes depending on participants' solutions. The moderator presents a number of problems and participants may together or divided into in groups before they start discussing how to solve the problems.

- Simulation exercises (games with an opponent) are very complex with a high degree of interactivity and detail, in which the goal is to try to create a virtual crisis experience for the participants. As an exercise form, it enables participants to practise certain functions in an artificial (simulated or arranged) environment. The principle is that the artificial environment shall as accurately as possible imitate reality. The basis for an exercise such as this is a more open and experience-based methodology, in which exercise participants are made to respond and take action in a situation rather than merely discuss it.

Within an overall scenario, the exercise participants are to respond to events which are "played back" and take appropriate action. It is important to remember that participants may not pretend that various tasks have been carried out. On the contrary, everything must be performed as if this were a real event. It is vital to keep to the information that is given and not replace or exclude anything.

Opposing forces, as they are commonly known, are needed for supplying exercise participants with incidents so that they have something deal with and respond to. Depending on the scale of the exercise, the opposing forces may constitute anything from a person with a telephone – referred to as a donor – to a large opposing force centre with experts and advanced technical support.

Implementing such an exercise requires a relatively large input in the planning and production of game documents such as instructions, related schedules, playlists, donor instructions, visual materials and so forth. A simulation often holds a very high educational value for both the exercise participants as well as the donors in the opposing forces section. The proportions between the play and simulated part (the opposing force) can be varied within very broad limits.

The preparation work for an exercise with opposing forces tends to be quite extensive and time consuming but even this type of exercise may be implemented on a smaller scale. The simplest variant may be one or two people sitting on the

telephone in an adjoining room, acting as the external environment, providing input for exercise participants.

Choice of exercise form affects the level of difficulty for performing an evaluation. A seminar exercise that takes place in a room with no, or few recordings, is of course easier and demands fewer resources for evaluation than a simulation exercise with a high degree of interactivity and numerous participants in various rooms. The form of exercise chosen is determined to a large extent by participants' knowledge level and the issues targeted by the exercise.

4.2.2 Resources required for collecting relevant data

The chosen exercise form and the resources available must allow the collection of relevant data for evaluation. In addition, estimating the amount of resources required by evaluation is vital. Who will be involved, how much time and technology will be used during the exercise with the aim of gathering relevant information?

An evaluation of high quality is labour intensive. Different types of resources, such as people, time, technical equipment (audio or video recording) and experts may be needed to document participants' behaviour.

Those in charge of planning the exercise and the evaluation have to work together and discuss the aims of the exercise as well as the format to be used. This should be done in the early stages.

Early planning is crucial as the exercise format gives an indication of how resource intensive evaluation becomes. It is also important to choose an exercise format which allows the evaluator to document the course of events. The evaluation moderator should then consider what resources are available during and after an exercise in order to create an appropriate evaluation template.

It is difficult to assess exactly how demanding the evaluation of an exercise will be as this depends on several different factors. Usually, a large part of the course of events needs to be

documented during the exercise, by direct observation on site (of action taken by exercise participants during the exercise – in meetings, phone calls and so forth). Moreover, the various activities carried out by exercise participants (log, e-mail traffic, video recordings of for example press conferences and so on) generate documentation that may be used in the evaluation.

It is also essential to take into account the number of people participating in an exercise and nature of the exercise site or premises. A small number of people in a room will obviously require fewer monitors of the exercise than a large number of people in various locations.

However, it is important to point out that an exercise site must not become overrun by evaluators, as the dynamics which the exercise is designed to produce may be jeopardised. A balance is needed so that the participants are not disturbed while the conditions exist for the evaluator or evaluators to collect the necessary information.

As there are many elements that constitute an evaluation, it would be advisable to develop a time and resource allocation plan and a budget estimate. This is partly for the process of designing an evaluation template, and partly for the work of collecting, processing, analysing and disseminating evaluation results. In addition, external evaluators, experts and any technical equipment should be included in the budget estimates for evaluation work.

4.2.3 Method for documenting and disseminating evaluation findings

The key aspect of an evaluation is that it should be of practical and beneficial use. It is important to identify the recipients of the different parts of the evaluation as they may often vary. A good method might be to discuss the evaluation with clients in order to find out the identities of the intended recipients of evaluation. The evaluator might also explain to the clients how the evaluation is conducted and what questions it may, or may not, be able to answer. The discussion should also address how the results (of the evaluation) will be used and how what presentation form the recipient requires (oral, summary, longer report and so on) so that the results may be utilised.



4.3 Formulating evaluation questions and basis for analysis

4.3.1 The evaluation question

Naturally, a good evaluation question must be related to the purpose and objectives of the exercise. In addition, the answer must be something that may be observed and evaluated; asking a question that cannot be answered is pointless. This reiterates the importance that the exercise and the evaluation should be developed in an integrated process.

For example, if the internal communication processes within an organisation are to be observed, analysed and evaluated, a suitable exercise format must be selected for this purpose. Exercise management, the client and evaluation moderators should together discuss how an exercise might best to evoke a situation that will shed light on and reflect an organisation's internal communication processes in line with objectives. These questions may, for example, be about how exercise participants dealt with stress and excess information. Did participants organise themselves appropriately for the situation? Could decisions be made efficiently? Did participants act favourably or unfavourably in terms of the capacity required? What is it that makes an action favourable or unfavourable?

When the evaluation questions have been prepared, they should be reviewed on the basis that it must be possible to answer them. The following questions must be asked: is it possible to answer these questions with the resources (people, expertise, time and technology) that are available? Does the available theory allow observations to be analysed and appraised?

In addition, it should also be remembered that an individual exercise may not be used for an endless array of purposes. The questions and issues that an exercise is to answer and resolve must be prioritised in order to maintain high quality. If for various reasons several different question areas start to arise during the process, the evaluator must be able to put a stop to this. It also becomes difficult for those documenting the course of events if too many questions are to be answered in the same exercise.

The evaluator should, however, always be open to highlighting new and interesting aspects and observations that may arise during the exercise.

Examples of the parts of a staff and decision exercise which may be evaluated:

- staff work/work processes
- organisation/management
- coordination
- communication processes (internal and external)
- information/data processing
- stress management.

4.3.2 Formulating Assessment Criteria for Analysis

In an evaluation some form of assessment is always carried out. Consequently, there must be clearly presented assessment criteria against which to assess collected material. Ideally, assessment criteria are drawn up in the collaboration between those in charge of the evaluation and exercise as well as other relevant actors in the exercise.

Exercises in strategic crisis management present the evaluator with two main problems. Firstly, there are, in general, no agreed and established criteria and standards for what constitutes good crisis management. So what then is good crisis management? Is it efficient management, the capacity for coordination and collaboration, the ability to restore normality quickly and reduce uncertainty or good PR and media image? Here it is important that, prior to the exercise, discussions are held with participants about how to assess various aspects during the specific exercise. For example, what does the capacity for coordination and efficient management mean in this particular exercise?

It may be difficult to declare what is right or wrong because so much is situational and individually-based. In operational crisis management, this challenge is often less troublesome when, for example, there are procedures for how long it should take for the emergency services to arrive at the emergency site and how they

should organise themselves. Similar standards are often lacking at the strategic level. What is unequivocally right in one situation may be utterly wrong in another.

It is for each organisation to decide what should be a priority, bearing in mind, of course, that lending more weight to one priority will result in less scope provided for others. The choice may be connected to the situation of the individual and organisation, which in turn will affect the outcome. The risk is that if the evaluator lacks sufficient knowledge of the complexity of crisis management, the criteria for evaluation may be unfair or even unreasonable.

There are often legal requirements specifying criteria that can be used, such as which authority and which specific function are responsible and how decisions are made and implemented. This provides the initial values for how exercise participants' conduct may be analysed and evaluated. Be prepared that these are often abstract and therefore require conversion to more operational and concrete terms. Past experience and previous exercises may be helpful in this regard.

Another important source is the established practice of the authority which can be used as an informal standard for how an organisation should respond to an emergency. There may also be general guiding principles from comparables or sectors, which may be useful when formulating criteria. Criteria can also be drawn up on the basis of information that can be found in the background documents prepared for the exercise or interviews within organisation. Naturally, common sense should also be used.

MSB wishes to emphasise the importance of assessing exercise participants' conduct in light of the conditions in the exercise. Their actions are naturally affected by factors such as, for example, the information that was available in the scenario and the support functions that were available during the exercise. Evaluators should take into account these and other constraints in an exercise so that a fair assessment may be made, as it is often not possible, or necessary, to fully reflect reality in an exercise.

4.4 Training the evaluators

The head of evaluation appointed for the exercise should see to it that everyone in the evaluation group is informed about the organisation and participants before the exercise. This increases the probability of evaluators managing to obtain the required information during the exercise.

The evaluator collecting materials during the exercise should ideally be trained for his/her task. A short course may provide good support for the task of evaluating an exercise.

Examples of materials that could be presented and distributed to the evaluators:

- the most important background documentation listing the purpose and objectives of the exercise
- rules of the exercise
- the exercise scenario
- relevant legislation
- documentation on previous organisational experience of crises
- information describing organisational processes
- task/assignment and work description
- crisis plans
- previous organisational experience of exercises.

Further support for evaluators is provided by the jointly developed assessment criteria for the questions to be answered. What should the evaluator look for and how should he or she evaluate impressions of participant action? Legal criteria must be complied with – which government organisation is responsible or which specific function within an authority is responsible and so on. There may also be general norms, and guiding principles from comparable agencies or sectors that might be useful.

4.4.1 Initial values

Initial values for what the evaluator is to observe should be given so as to ensure that the information collected by the evaluator holds significance. The evaluator may be provided with a list of

essential exercise stages, which might also serve as a timeline so that the evaluator knows when important events are expected to occur during the exercise.

Examples of other significant initial values for the evaluator:

- how the central exercise phases are initiated in the exercise (recorder, telephone, video and so forth)
- a brief explanation of behaviours or measures that are desirable, that is to say the objective of exercise stages (may also be complemented with the expected action)
- the role or function that should perform a task.

4.5 Observing the exercise, conducting direct feedback

The evaluator's records of the course of events and gathering of impressions and reflections from exercise participants are important in order to evaluate the following:

- participants' actions and behaviour in the exercise
- how exercise procedure affected execution of the exercise
- if the exercise was useful for exercise participants.

The evaluator may use different types of material in order to evaluate an exercise:

- **Primary Material:** Participant observation, logs, notes from participants, e-mail, telephone reports, audio and video recordings and so forth.
- **Secondary materials:** There is a variety of materials produced for one exercise, including orientation documents (exercise objectives), exercise regulations, scenario documents and so on.
- **Direct feedback:** After the exercise's active phase, participants may meet for the opportunity to share their impressions and reflections on what happened.
- **Personal interviews:** interviews may also provide valuable information on lessons learned and impressions from training input. These may be conducted with both participants and people in exercise management who may answer questions on the exercise itself and on the method chosen for the exercise.

Example of an evaluation template (behaviour, functions and processes)

1. How did decision-makers initially perceive the situation (as a normal or an extraordinary event)?
2. How did decision-makers perceive pressure of time (no pressure of time, urgent, very urgent)?
3. Were the mandate and responsibilities discussed?
 - Was it apparent which authority or body “owned” the problem legally and symbolically?
 - Did the perception of roles change over time?
4. Were there formal routines or preparedness plans for how the authority should take action in a crisis?
 - If there was a preparedness plan, was it used?
5. Crisis management group/staff
 - How was it organised?
 - Were routines developed (e.g. chairman, documentation manager, external information etc.)?
 - What premises were chosen for crisis management work?
 - Was the necessary equipment available at the site?
6. Decision-making:
 - Where in the organisation are decisions made during the crisis cycle?
 - Were decisions taken appropriate considering the circumstances?
 - Did the body follow up on decisions taken (saw to it that they were implemented)?
7. Information routines:
 - How was information collected and delivered internally and externally?
 - Were there established routines for internal/external information dissemination?
 - Was the information verified (review of sources)?
 - Which channels/technical resources were used for information dissemination?
 - Was the information verified (review of sources)?
 - Which channels/technical resources were used for information dissemination?

- Observers' impressions and reflections: Observers, usually subject experts or people from other agencies, are often invited to give their impressions according to their respective fields of study or operations. Observers can also keep records that might benefit analysis.
- Evaluation forms: these may be distributed to exercise participants and members of the evaluation team.
- Feedback seminar: an occasion for evaluators, after a certain period of time, to present preliminary conclusions and obtain views/comments from participants.

Utilisation of time has a major impact on evaluation, in particular the question of how much of the total exercise time available should be used to conduct the exercise and how much should be used for direct feedback.

MSB advocates the 50-50 rule, that half the time is used for the actual exercise and the other half for the experience feedback to participants. This is because the exercise itself is actually just the beginning - it is through discussion and reflection that lessons learned and experiences are made tangible and practical for the participants. Moreover, in this way the evaluator gains an important opportunity to gather valuable impressions of participants, which may lead to new and useful material as well as provide a certain quality assurance before completing the evaluation report. For longer exercises, literal application of the 50-50 rule is not feasible. However, it is of course always essential that a generous amount of time be spent on a proper feedback session after the exercise.

4.5.1 Primary material

Primary material is the basis of an evaluation because the aim is to find out, as closely as possible, exercise participants' impressions, experiences, feelings, ideas and lessons learned. The most common way to gain such data is through participant observation during the exercise itself. It may also be beneficial to look more closely at the material created from the participants' work during the actual exercise.

This could include fictitious interviews that have been made for recorded media, written reports on the fictitious emergency, log-books in which exercise participants will hopefully have recorded their actions or photographs of notes made by participants on whiteboards or similar. This material may be supplemented by interviews, evaluation forms or seminar discussions.

Holding in-depth interviews is the best to really find out what participants thought of the exercise, their own and others' actions and what they might have learned. In-depth interviews are conducted in order to find out participants' feelings, thoughts and intentions, which are obviously difficult to observe.

If various types of technical equipment are used in the exercise, for example, telephone and e-mail, this information should be saved, as simply as possible, for pending analysis. If the telephone is used, different evaluators could be placed in the various rooms so that later they may compare notes about what was said. However, resources are only allocated in this way at certain times, as such information very rarely needs to be collected in order to respond to the exercise's purpose and objectives.

Another possibility is to record all telephone calls, although transcribing the conversations may be time-consuming and participating organisations do not always approve the storage of such material. Alternatively, participants could be interviewed on these occasions after the exercise.

Email documentation facilitates this task, since it usually creates specific email addresses for an exercise. Relevant material may then be printed after the exercise and included in the evaluation.

The evaluator should carefully consider where to position himself/herself during the exercise so that participant observation may be carried out in the best way. However, it is important for the evaluator to keep a certain distance from participants so as not to disturb them or risk being drawn into the exercise. It is also essential that the evaluator informs participants of his/her role during the exercise, so that everyone knows who he or she is.

4.5.2 Secondary material

Exercise evaluations are, as mentioned before, highly dependent on primary material but there is also reason to use secondary materials in different ways. Exercise regulations, scenario documents and not least evaluations from past exercises and other real experiences of emergencies are a few examples of secondary materials which may provide a useful background when evaluating an exercise.

4.5.3 Evaluation forms

Evaluation forms are a good method of harvesting a large quantity of impressions, reflections from participants from the exercise and on whether the format and method of execution helped achieve the aims of the exercise. The evaluation forms should be distributed and collected in connection with the exercise, after direct feedback, in order to obtain the highest possible response rate.

If for various reasons it is not possible to give out evaluation forms directly adjacent to the exercise, e-mail may be a good alternative, although even if the responses are to be treated anonymously, it will not be entirely possible to fulfil this goal. All in all, however, sending out evaluation forms by e-mail is an efficient and controlled way of collecting answers from numerous respondents.

Examples of evaluation forms on both the exercise and its execution may be found in Annex 1 and 2.

4.5.4 Observers

The evaluation team may be enhanced by the involvement of observers, which are usually on site during an exercise. It is important to select observers with care and we recommend that there be rather an observer too few than one too many, as too much overt scrutiny might disturb exercise participants and make them feel ill at ease. It may also lead to the perception of the situation as unrealistic with too much external presence on site.

Observers are often subject specialists or experts from other organisations invited to give their impressions based on their particular fields of knowledge or operations. Highly respected observers, prominent in their field, who verify the exercise make it more likely that participants will take in lessons learned and assimilate new knowledge and experience gained. In addition, observers can be asked to take notes that may benefit analysis.

4.5.5 Direct feedback (Hot Wash Up)

Directly following completion of the exercise, participants are given the opportunity to talk through and present their experiences, led by a moderator. It may be worthwhile hearing about participants' impressions of the exercise before these have been discussed and analysed within each organisation. If there is an opportunity to conduct a direct feedback session, in which all representatives are gathered, evaluators may hand out a short questionnaire for each participating organisation to respond to individually and in direct connection with the exercise.

Examples of points for discussion for a moderator to use in order to enable participants to talk about their experiences after an exercise.

- What happened in the exercise?
- What is/are the reason(s) for these results from the exercise?
- What worked well and not so well during the exercise?
- What would you improve?
- What was your experience of the exercise (both in the positive and negative sense)?
- Did you know about the emergency management organisation and staff functions?
- What was your experience of collaborating with other bodies (worked well / did not work very well)?
- Did you feel that the information flow worked? Did it break down anywhere? Did you receive enough information in order to perform your duties?
- Was the available equipment sufficient for the purpose of carrying out the mission?
- How did the chosen exercise format impact your actions?
- Other comments (scenario, structure, value for the future, additional exercise activities for the future).

4.6 Analysing collected material and compiling evaluation report

After the exercise has been completed and all data has been collected, the next step is to conduct an analysis. An important issue for the evaluator to consider is how this should be done.

4.6.1 Structuring

On completion of an exercise, the evaluator often needs to sort and systematize a substantial amount of material in a way that is intelligible and easy to grasp. It is not uncommon that he or she has a relatively short amount of time to collate the evaluation. A good way of sorting the information is to divide it into, for example, “direct observations from the exercise”, “material from direct feedback” and “post-exercise responses” such as any questionnaires and interviews.

4.6.2 Drawing up criteria

As mentioned earlier, the questions to be answered need clear criteria in order to facilitate analysis. It is also essential to note the difficulty of analysing and evaluating the exercise participants’ conduct. They must perceive that they have been evaluated fairly in order to learn from the evaluation.

4.6.3 Feedback seminar

Organising a feedback seminar some time after the exercise is a good way of gathering more information and ensuring the quality of the evaluation, when participants themselves have been able to reflect on their own efforts and those of their organisation during the exercise. This is also an excellent time for evaluators to recap on their preliminary results. Do initial reflections make sense and correlate? Has anything been misunderstood or missed out entirely? Feedback seminars provide participants with practical and substantial involvement in the process, making it more likely that they will absorb and utilise lessons learned.

While gaining the resources for conducting follow-up meetings may be a challenge, this constitutes a crucial element in order to provide the conditions for learning long-term and increase the return for exercise operations.

4.6.4 Compiling the evaluation report

In general, an evaluation report may contain the following:

- summary
- background to the exercise
- purpose and objectives of the exercise
- exercise format – why this method was chosen, its advantages and disadvantages
- the scenario – main events of the exercise
- response to the purpose and objectives – describe and highlight action taken and deviations
- conclusions and lessons learned
- proposals for implementation
- next step in the exercise process.

When compiling the report, the following points are important to bear in mind:

- The evaluator must understand that just as exercise participants will differ in attributes, experience and capacity, there are various ways of reporting their results: complex analysis, detailed reports or short oral briefings. Above all, the method should be tailored to the recipient and it is vital to present findings in a clear and informative manner.
- Timing does matter. The evaluation should be completed while memories and impressions of the exercise are still fresh. A balance must be found between thoroughness and quality, and time and availability.
- The evaluator must respect the client's obligations and prerequisites. The client's interests should be discussed early and continuously monitored during the exercise process.
- Plans for usage and dissemination should be in mind from the outset, as part of evaluation design.
- The evaluator and clients must agree on evaluation goals, but also on the criteria that will determine how best to use the evaluation.

Another important aspect is that the evaluator should be able to find a balance between praise and blame. In any situations where crisis management has been considered successful, there will be examples of action that did not work as well as expected, just as within unsuccessful management there are examples of conduct that produced good results. Certainly, the evaluator must have good didactic awareness and be able to convey a balance between commending and criticising so that participants may be able to take in lessons learned.

4.7 Presenting and disseminating evaluation findings

Even before the exercise the evaluator and the client should have agreed on how the material is to be presented and need to carefully think through the various methods of presentation available.

As mentioned earlier, the dissemination of evaluation findings is important in order to convey and communicate lessons learned within an organisation as conclusions and lessons learned that are drawn from an exercise must also be implemented.

The various actors and stakeholders with an interest in the exercise need to be identified, involved and informed about what to expect. This raises the likelihood of the evaluation being used.

How then should the lessons learned be utilised and disseminated to the stakeholders concerned? It requires the solid foundation of effective communication between those responsible for the evaluation and its users. This communication may base itself on a mutual exchange of information during the evaluation process, which may instill a sense of ownership for exercise participants.

It is best if there are several alternative pathways that will allow data to be disseminated within the organisation and possibly to other organisations. These may entail, for example, different presentations of results to management and personnel at their organisation and other organisations. Short summary articles may be written for authority newspapers or posted on relevant organisation websites. In addition, a more comprehensive report may be compiled. One must therefore ensure that the report will actually be read by those concerned, by, for example, setting a date for follow-up discussions and seminars on report contents.

The main report itself should therefore be seen as only one way of disseminating lessons learned about the incident. After all, while reports stream rapidly through the world of authorities and organisations, very often, comprehensive and factual reports tend to get lodged in drawers and stagnate on bookshelves and alternative means of dissemination may be preferable. Allowing information seekers to look up the material in the form of reports in PDF format on the web is one way. Presenting conclusions during training initiatives, such as lectures or seminars is another.

A further aspect of how to present evaluation is the question of who should ensure that the evaluation findings are disseminated, read and produce the desired effect. Certainly, this responsibility requires sound communication skills.

Our suggestion is that, even before the exercise, a work group should be appointed, responsible for following up the lessons learned from the exercise. This group may then provide appropriate initial values and priorities for the next exercise in order to practise changes that have been introduced or to highlight neglected proposals from the evaluation.

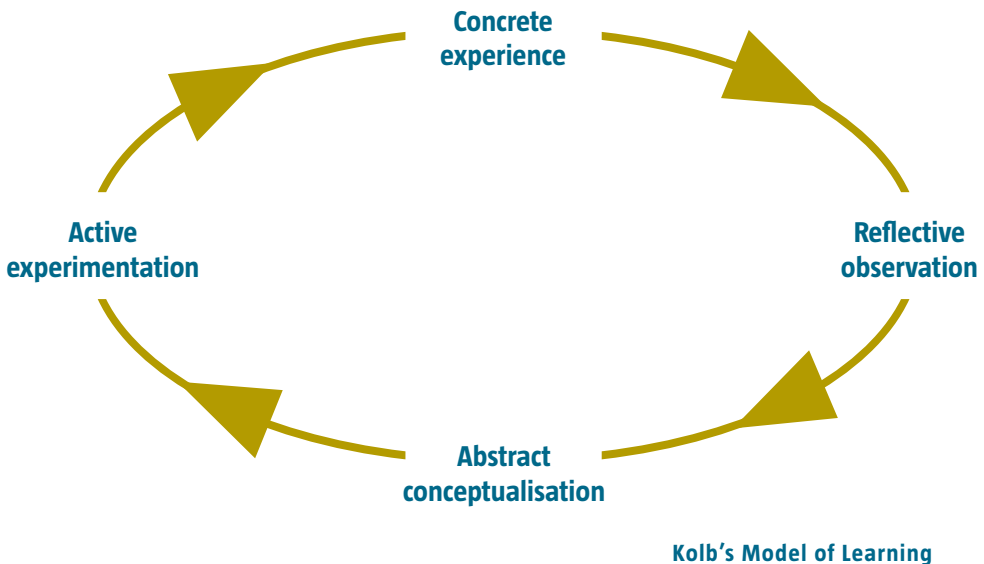
The work group should aim to highlight and focus on the most important messages. It would also be of benefit if the conclusions and lessons learned might be presented as concrete proposals for improvements or recommendations rather than merely point out vague and general patterns. Some of the issues that may be topical are: what equipment do we need? What technologies are we in need of? What are the skills and competencies required? What skills and training do we need in order to achieve our objectives?

Who may be part of the work group? A head of evaluation often have a good insight into the lessons learned from the exercise. Here, it is also a good idea to involve an internal person, possibly in support of an external evaluation moderator, as the internal person, of course, remains in the organisation after the exercise has been completed. Obstacles may arise and hinder evaluation moderators while they are monitoring and following the implementation of lessons learned from an exercise after it ends.

4.8 Utilising lessons learned and planning the next exercise

A good learning process is often based on repetition. All too often, however, the exercise itself is used as the point of departure for evaluation rather than the context in which participants and their organisation operate. In particular, past experience of emergencies and other challenging events and previous exercises, and not least their evaluation, is central. Evaluation that merely focuses on one incident or exercise loses the information and learning that might emerge in a comparison of other similar incidents and exercises.

The following model¹ shows learning as a four-stage cycle:



Active experimentation, an exercise, gives participants concrete experience. Reaching a higher level of knowledge, however, requires time for experience feedback in the form of reflective observation, a discussion led by a moderator after the exercise. The reflective observation is then followed up, with participants

¹ Kolb, *Experiential Learning* (1984)

meeting again a certain time after the exercise in order to review and re-establish the lessons learned that emerged from the exercise. This period of experience feedback is followed by work on change and improvements within the organisation. Subsequently, plans for a further exercise may be initiated in order to test how organisation is progress after implementation of change.

This learning cycle also shows that evaluations of previous exercises are an appropriate starting point for identifying the aims and objectives of a new exercise. Former evaluations may also be used to provide a framework for how conduct in an exercise may be assessed. Moreover, if exercises always have the same features and format, interest in participating is likely to wane.

It is crucial that the organisation learns from experience. Experiences and lessons learned must be recorded so that they are not forgotten as those individuals who possess the essential knowledge, skills and experience may change positions or leave. Consequently, lessons learned and experience must be documented and analysed so that there is a living process of learning about routines, what action works well and what does not, in order to manage future crises more successfully.

Good advice

Good advice

To conclude, we have compiled some advice and recommendations on how to conduct a quality evaluation and how an evaluation may impact an organisation.

- An evaluation constitutes an essential part of the entire cycle of the exercise process rather than serving merely as the final step. Evaluation is important because it affects, and is itself in turn affected by, all other components of an exercise and therefore should be included in exercise planning from the outset.
- Formulate clear aims and objectives for the exercise. If these are at all vague or ambiguous, however, the evaluation findings will most likely be vague and unclear as well. Consequently, clearly formulated assessment criteria must be drawn up, about which there is general consensus among all involved.
- Involve management - this sends a signal throughout the entire organisation that exercises are to be taken seriously by everyone. Management is also a recipient and user of an exercise evaluation.
- Application of the 50–50-rule is preferable: half the time for the exercise and half the time for experience feedback, reflection and discussion on events and experiences during the exercise. Sufficient time must be set aside for this so that the individual may develop deeper awareness and understanding of what he or she has experienced during the exercise and not risk losing this opportunity.
- Use time and resources in order to identify and establish contact with recipients of the exercise evaluation. This makes it easier to understand what information they consider relevant and how they would like information packaged and presented.
- The evaluation should consider participants' experience, education and training in relation to how this is evaluated. The good as well as that which is not should always be taken up in order to give a balanced view of conduct.

- Appoint a work group to follow the exercise process and subsequently ensure that lessons learned from an exercise are implemented within the organisation.
- Do compile brief and relevant information on the organisation's emergency management planning and previous experience of emergencies for new employees.
- Include people who usually prepare and conduct evaluations and make observations as participants in the exercises on occasion. This may provide them with inspiration and the opportunity to assimilate new experiences.
- Evaluations of exercises are not only valuable for one's own organisation: they also have significance for society at large when such work may support the development of standards and guiding principles for good crisis management

**Suggestions for
further reading**

Suggestions for further reading

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Annex

Annex 1 – Examples of evaluation form questions on events in the exercise

Are you familiar with your preparedness organisation, its structure and procedures?

- Yes
- No
- Partly

How would you rate the work of the crisis management group/staff?

- Very good
- Good
- Acceptable
- Poor

Were there any functions lacking in your crisis management group/staffs?

- Yes
- No
- Partly

What rating would you give internal collaboration within the organisation?

- Very good
- Good
- Acceptable
- Poor

How would you rate internal information dissemination?

- Very good
- Good
- Acceptable
- Poor

How would you rate contacts with the mass media?

- Very good
- Good
- Acceptable
- Poor

In your opinion, were enough resources available for handling the situation?

- Yes
- No
- Partly

Did the training and knowledge you received enable you to solve the task?

- Yes
- No
- Partly

What three most important experiences from exercise (lessons learned for authority) will you take with you?

Annex 2 – Examples of evaluation questions on exercise format

To what extent have the exercise overall objectives been achieved, in your opinion?

- Fully achieved
- To a good extent
- To an acceptable extent
- To a poor extent

How would you rate the exercise structure and contents as a whole?

- Very good
- Good
- Acceptable
- Poor

How relevant was the scenario in relation to the purpose of the exercise?

- Very relevant
- Relevant
- Quite relevant
- Not very relevant

How highly would you rate the value of the exercise for your organisation's operations/role?

- Of very high value
- Of high value
- Of reasonable value
- Of minor value

How highly would you rate the significance of the exercise for creating networks?

- Of very high value
- Of high value
- Of reasonable value
- Of minor value

How did you find the length of the exercise? Was it:

- Too long
- Of an appropriate length
- Too short

How did you find the pacing of the exercise? Was it:

- Too fast
- Appropriate
- Too slow

In advance of the exercise, did you receive sufficient information from the person(s) responsible on how it would be conducted?

- Yes
- No
- Partly

