Exercises in both the public and private sectors are necessary to improve emergency preparedness, strengthen prevention and enhance societal capacities for dealing with emergencies and disasters. As an intricate part of the disaster management cycle and primarily of the preparedness element, the Exercises Section aims to strengthen society by acting as the initiating and coordinating body for national, interagency, cross-sector exercises in the field of civil protection; as well as supporting similar exercises on the regional level. This process stems from the National Exercises Programme 2010-2012 policy document produced by the section. A policy document that is groundbreaking in its extensive ambitions.

To contribute to the accomplishment of this goal, the section is developing a net based exercises portal, in which best practices, methodologies, guidelines and the tools necessary to initiate, undertake and learn from an exercise are collated.

The section also utilises a unique exercise methodology, which fundamentally follows a cyclical process that is initiated by a number of stages through assigning, comprehensive planning, practical preparation and implementation; followed by evaluation feedback and lessons learned. Due to its cyclical nature, the final process of lessons learned serves as a foundation on which to build a new assignment.

While the MSB’s colleges focus more on professional trade training, the Exercises Section centres its efforts on providing a forum where the interoperability of civil protection agencies and organisations is scrutinised and evaluated across sector, regional and national boundaries. The section, therefore, also initiates, and coordinates Sweden’s overseas commitment to civil protection exercises.

The Exercises Section, Training Section and Revinge and Sandö Colleges offer society a continuous process ranging from professional trade training to cross-sector interagency based exercises on the local, regional, national, and international levels.

The MSB works with the entire emergency cycle, in other words, before, during and after the occurrence of emergencies, crises and disasters, which provides good opportunities to adopt a holistic perspective and to gain experience from incidents. Regardless of whether it is one person that is affected, for example, in an accident in the home, or if it is a serious emergency that could have consequences for the entire country or even other countries as well.

The objective of the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB) is to strengthen society’s ability to prevent and handle accidents and severe peacetime emergencies. Society can learn from past experience by evaluation and follow-up in a continuous process where experience is being used to organise and develop tasks for the actors in the civil emergency planning system. Evaluation and learning from accidents and disasters, supervision and monitoring, need for new research and support for civil emergency planning activities are important tasks in order to strengthen societal security and to support prevention, preparedness, response and recovery throughout the disaster management cycle.