

14 January 2026 - TR Workshop Majuro Day 2
Session 10

Sustaining Readiness through Regular Tsunami
Communications Exercises

Sustaining Readiness through Regular Tsunami Communications Exercises

Review of IOC Resources
14 January 2026 - Majuro, RMI

Why Exercise?

Why Exercise?

- Improve Coordination
- Improve Operational Readiness
- Improve response time, especially important for local (regional) tsunamis
- Identify planning weaknesses
- Identify resource gaps
- Improve inter-agency coordination & communications
- Provide training (new staff, leadership, roles/responsibilities)
- Clarify roles & responsibilities
- Evaluate plans, policies & procedures
- Test equipment, especially communications methods to the last island/atoll
- Improve individual performance
- Demonstrate capability
- Develop the knowledge, skills & enthusiasm to participate in emergencies
- Gain public recognition (trust) of emergency programs; promote public awareness

Types of Exercises

1. Orientation Exercise
2. Drill Exercise
3. Table-Top Exercise
4. Functional Exercise
5. Full-Scale Exercise

Exercises range from simple to complex, and can be used at the national or local level, depending on which functions are intended to be exercised

You can choose which type of exercise suits your requirements. Stakeholder agencies involved in the end-to-end tsunami warning, as well as post-disaster response and the media, can be involved.

1. Orientation Exercise

Referred to as a ‘walk through’, often conducted through a workshop. Puts people in place where they would work during a tsunami response, or uses them as participants in a demonstration of an activity. Lays foundation for exercise program

- No previous EX related to tsunami has been conducted
- No recent real tsunami events have occurred
- A need to bring together Orgs (govt, NGOs, private sector) in developing emergency response planning, problem solving, SOPs, resource integration
- New plan has been developed that requires testing
- There are new procedures
- There are new staff or leadership
- There is a new facility
- There is a new risk
- Personnel training is required

2. Drill Exercise

Staff physically handle specific equipment or perform a specific procedure or single operation. A drill usually focuses on a single organization, facility or agency such as a hotel, school, village, etc. The EX usually has a time frame element and is used to test procedures.

- Assess equipment capabilities
- Test response time
- Train personnel
- Assess interagency cooperation
- Verify resource & staffing capabilities

3. Table-Top Exercise

Participants are presented with a situation or problem that they're required to discuss & form the appropriate response/solution. Typically requires no simulation other than a scenario and/or prewritten EX injects. An EX controller or moderator introduces a simulated scenario and in time, injects are introduced. TTX is used to practice problem solving and coordination of services. No deployment or actual use of resources.

- Practices group problem solving
- Promote familiarity with plans
- Assess plan coverage for a specific case study/specific risk area
- Examine staffing contingencies
- Test group message interpretation
- Assess interagency or interdepartmental coordination
- Observe information sharing
- Train personnel

4. Functional Exercise

Also known as an ‘Operational’ or ‘Tactical’ exercise, it takes place in an operational environment, requiring participants to perform the functions of their roles. A complex response activity is simulated, often with multiple activities to carry out the response. It lacks people ‘on the ground’ to create a full-scale exercise. Typically involves multi-agency participation, focusing on one or many geographical areas. Tests SOPs and internal/external communications between agencies.

- Evaluate a function; or test physical facilities use
- Reinforce or test established policies & procedures
- Assess preparedness
- Test seldom-used resources
- Measure resource adequacy
- Assess and strengthen inter-jurisdictional or inter-agency relations
- Support policy formulation

5. Full-Scale Exercise

Also known as a 'practical' or 'field' EX; they include the movement/deployment of people & resources to include physical response 'on the ground' to a simulated situation. It could be labelled as the climax of a progressive EX program. Typically used to test all aspects of a country's warning & emergency management systems & processes, and to the extent practical, using actual centers & comms methods.

- Assess & improve an operational activity
- Assess & improve interagency cooperation
- Assess negotiation procedures
- Test resource & personnel allocation
- Manage the public & media
- Assess personnel & equipment locations
- Test equipment capabilities

Exercise Development

1. Analyze the need
2. Design the exercise
3. Conduct the exercise
4. Evaluate the exercise

Tsunami Exercises: IOC Resources

- IOC Manuals & Guides 58
 - How to Plan, Conduct & Evaluate UNESCO/IOC Tsunami Wave Exercises
- IOC Manuals & Guides 82
 - Preparing for Community Tsunami Evacuations
- IOC Manuals & Guides 86
 - Multi-Agency Community Tsunami Exercise Programme
 - Guidelines for the Tsunami & other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean & Adjacent Regions