# Appendix 4 – Evaluation Plan

Heatwave Discussion Exercise

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## Background

The 2024-25 Emergency Management Exercise Program, established by the Premier’s Department, aims to support local and regional preparedness through multi-agency exercises aligned with State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) priorities. This program enhances emergency response capability across New South Wales by promoting continuous improvement in emergency management through practical exercises, strategic inter-agency coordination, and information sharing.

The SEMC focuses on advancing state-wide emergency management policy, enabling improved cooperation across agencies, and driving the evaluation of training and exercises. Region and Local Emergency Management Committees (REMCs and LEMCs) play a key role in supporting this mission by organising and evaluating emergency exercises that foster coordination and readiness at regional and local levels.

In the 2024-25 Financial Year, the program specifically targets three SEMC-endorsed exercise priorities: tsunami, heatwave, and cyber emergencies. Each priority tests different response capabilities, with tsunami and heatwave exercises focusing on local and regional impacts, and a state-level cyber emergency exercise addressing the complexities of cyber incidents. The program also incorporates lessons from the recent Emergency Volunteering Review, emphasising preparedness for informal or spontaneous volunteers.

The Premier’s Department provides exercise materials and financial support for REMCs and LEMCs to run exercises aligned with these priorities. Through this program, participating committees will strengthen local and regional emergency management capabilities, focusing on practical readiness for real-world challenges.

### Need

Heatwaves are increasingly frequent and severe hazards in Australia, impacting health, infrastructure, industry, and community resilience. In alignment with the State Emergency Management Committee’s (SEMC) 2024-25 priorities, this Discussion Exercise (DISCEX) provides LEMCs and REMC’s an opportunity to examine the challenges of managing heatwave events.

The exercise aims to strengthen community safety, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts by assessing and enhancing local and regional emergency management arrangements. Specific areas of focus include:

* Suitability, readiness, and effectiveness of local / regional emergency management plans for heatwave scenarios
* Adequacy of resources and logistical arrangements, ensuring LEMCs / REMC’s have the necessary support and infrastructure to respond effectively to heatwave emergencies
* Effectiveness of coordinated emergency response arrangements across agencies
* Coordination across all phases of the response—from initial warnings through active response to the early stages of recovery, addressing both short- and medium-term needs
* Awareness, knowledge, and skills gaps among LEMC / REMC and Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) members, as well as any training needs.

### Overview

This exercise will provide insights into the challenges of managing a coordinated LEMC or REMC response to a heatwave, focusing on the readiness and effectiveness of local emergency plans and resources. It aims to identify areas for improvement in planning, response coordination, and knowledge gaps within the LEMC or REMC, supporting enhanced resilience and response capability.

The target audience is government and non government agencies that would normally be part of an LEMC, REMC or EOC.

### Participants

Participants in this exercise will include members of the LEMC or REMC and representatives from participating organisations as defined in the area’s Local or Regional Emergency Management Plan. Participants include, but are not limited to:

* Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON) / Regional Emergency Operations Controller (REOCON)
* Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) / Regional Emergency Management Officer (REMO)
* LEMC / REMC Combat and Supporting Agency Representatives, as relevant to the area, including:
* NSW Ambulance
* NSW Rural Fire Service
* Fire & Rescue NSW
* NSW State Emergency Service
* Marine Rescue NSW
* VRA Rescue
* Surf Life Saving Australia
* Functional Area Coordinators and Representatives
* Other Stakeholders as deemed appropriate by the LEMC / REMC

## Aim

To evaluate LEMC/REMC arrangements for responding to a heatwave within the local area, in order to assess the effectiveness, readiness, and suitability of LEMC/REMC and Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) response and recovery plans.

[Insert additional or alternate aim as required]

## Exercise Objectives & Standards Measures

1. Ensure LEMC / REMC and EOC procedures are established for effective heatwave response.
2. LEMC/REMC identifies and references the relevant local or regional emergency plan
3. Actions are implemented in alignment with the relevant local or regional emergency plans

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Assess the scope and effectiveness of heatwave procedures to handle diverse scenarios.
2. Relevant emergency procedures provide clear guidance to support decision-making in dynamic and evolving emergency situations
3. Procedures enable actions and decisions that are practical, adaptive, and realistic in response to the unfolding emergency

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Confirm that all relevant stakeholders are familiar with the heatwave response procedures.
2. All participants and stakeholders are aware of the relevant emergency plans and know where to access them

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Identify gaps or weaknesses in LEMC / REMC and EOC procedures for heatwave scenarios.
2. Procedural gaps are identified and documented in the relevant evaluation collection tools

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Verify alignment of LEMC / REMC and EOC procedures with the updated NSW State Heatwave Sub Plan.
2. All participants are aware of the updated Heatwave Sub Plan, including the designation of NSW Ambulance as the combat agency
3. Responses, actions, and decisions during the exercise align with the methodology and content of the updated Heatwave Sub Plan

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Identify training, skills, or capability gaps among LEMC / REMC and EOC members.
2. Training, skills and capabilities gaps among LEMC/REMC members are identified and documented during the exercise
3. Communication gaps among LEMC/REMC members are identified and documented during the exercise
4. Any delays or inefficiencies in response actions are observed and recorded for further analysis
5. Decision-making challenges under simulated emergency conditions are identified and logged by evaluators
6. A method or plan for addressing identified shortfalls is proposed and documented

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Identify resource and logistical gaps within LEMC / REMC for heatwave response readiness.
2. Resource or logistical shortfalls, such as equipment or personnel limitations, are noted in relevant evaluation tools
3. A method or plan for addressing identified shortfalls is proposed and documented

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

## Evaluation Plan

### Purpose of Evaluation

The primary purpose of exercise evaluation is to assess both the effectiveness of the exercise and how well it met its stated aims and objectives.

A rigorous evaluation process enables planners and operational managers to systematically enhance future exercises, as well as related procedures, processes, and operational initiatives. Through observation, data collection, analysis, and reporting, evaluation transforms insights gained from the exercise into practical improvements for future operations.

Exercise evaluation involves a series of post-exercise activities focused on:

* Gathering feedback and assessing the conduct of the exercise
* Collecting insights on participant experiences
* Evaluating the achievement of exercise objectives
* Transferring lessons learned into lesson management systems

## Process of Evaluation

To facilitate a smooth and effective evaluation, an Exercise Evaluation Coordinator should be appointed prior to the exercise. The Coordinator’s primary role is to manage the overall evaluation process and lead the team of evaluators.

One or more evaluators should be appointed to assist with data collection and observation throughout the exercise. The number of evaluators required will depend on the exercise cohort size and the volume of data to be gathered. For smaller groups, the Exercise Coordinator may take on both evaluator and coordinator roles (see Attachment: EXCON Staff Responsibilities for the full list of Coordinator and Evaluator responsibilities).

### Data Collection & Observation

Data and observations will be gathered during and after the exercise using the following tools:

* Participant Feedback Form
* After-Action Review Debrief Forms
* Evaluator’s Observation Checklist

Templates for these forms are provided in the Exercise Evaluation Plan. EXCON staff may implement additional data collection methods as appropriate.

### Data Analysis

Upon completing the exercise, evaluators will return all completed data collection tools to the Exercise Evaluation Coordinator. The Coordinator will then compile and analyse the collected data and observations, documenting insights and lessons in the analysis tables within the Evaluation Plan.

### Exercise Report

Following data analysis, the Coordinator will prepare an exercise report on behalf of the Exercise Director, summarising key findings and lessons learned.

The final exercise and evaluation reports are to be submitted to the Premier’s Department and will contribute to the annual State Lessons Analysis process.

Any collateral generated from the exercise (e.g., photos, videos, case studies) should also be provided to the Premier’s Department to support a shared resource cache for agency reference and use.

## Exercise Debriefs

An essential component of a successful exercise is the ability to debrief the activities of the conduct phase. A series of debriefs will be required at the conclusion of an exercise. Depending on the scale of the exercise these may include:

* informal ‘hot’ debrief (immediately post-exercise) for:
* Participants
* EXCON
* formal debriefs for:
* role players
* organisation-specific debrief
* a formal multi-organisation debriefs involving all participants and EXCON team members
* exercise management debrief.

In all cases the debrief must be planned and communicated to all those who need to be involved.

During the debrief process, detailed information is collected at a lower level, with that information contributing to higher-level and subsequent debriefs.

Refer to the accompanying ‘Exercise Evaluation Plan’ for the AAR Debrief Observation Form.

## Exercise Reporting

Following data analysis, the Coordinator will prepare an exercise report on behalf of the Exercise Director, summarising key findings and lessons learned.

The final exercise and evaluation reports are to be submitted to the Premier’s Department and will contribute to the annual State Lessons Analysis process.

For a small exercise there may be one evaluator who produces a one-page report. For a large exercise there may be several individual evaluator reports that need to be analysed and summarised into the final exercise report.

The Exercise Evaluation Coordinator may be asked to draft the exercise report. Exercise reports should be produced to effect change and improvements. Reports do not have to be extensive to achieve that. Exercise reports should clearly identify areas or issues to be improved. They should include enough context for each issue or provide links to that context. If opportunities for improvement or recommendations are identified, they can be included.

The Exercise Director is responsible for finalising the exercise report and then sending it to those responsible for resolving the opportunities for improvement or recommendations that have been identified.

Refer to the accompanying ‘Exercise Evaluation Plan’ for the Exercise Report template.

Any collateral generated from the exercise (e.g., photos, videos, case studies) should also be provided to the Premier’s Department to support a shared resource cache for agency reference and use.

## Attachments

* 4A - Participant Feedback Sheet
* 4B - Evaluation Report
* 4C - Evaluation Report Data
* 4D - After Action Review Debrief Form
* 4E - Observation Checklist