# Appendix 4 – Evaluation Plan

Tsunami Functional 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

Tsunamis are a low-frequency but high-impact hazard with the potential to cause widespread devastation to coastal communities, critical infrastructure, and public safety. In response to the ongoing risk posed by tsunamis, it is essential for LEMCs and REMCs to evaluate their ability to effectively manage such emergencies in real time.

This functional activation exercise addresses the following identified needs:

* **Gaps in Preparedness:** There is a need to test and improve local and regional emergency plans for tsunami scenarios, focusing on their effectiveness in managing complex, real-time emergencies. This exercise provides an opportunity to evaluate the practicality and adaptability of current response protocols and identify potential areas for enhancement.
* **Capability Assessment:** Ensuring the adaptability and readiness of LEMC/REMC members in managing complex and evolving scenarios is essential. This exercise provides an opportunity to practise and assess their ability to apply emergency procedures effectively and adapt to dynamic situations in a simulated environment.
* **Interagency Coordination:** Effective management of tsunami events relies on seamless communication and collaboration among multiple agencies. This exercise provides an opportunity to evaluate interagency protocols, ensuring that communication and information flow effectively support coordinated emergency management.
* **New Risks and Requirements:** Increased urbanisation, growing populations in coastal areas, and community vulnerabilities have elevated the risk profile for tsunami events. This underscores the need to align procedures, resource allocation, and overall readiness with the current Tsunami Sub Plan and validate these elements in a controlled, simulated environment.

By conducting this exercise, LEMCs and REMCs will gain valuable insights into their readiness and effectiveness in managing tsunami emergencies, identify areas for improvement, and strengthen their overall capability to protect lives, infrastructure, and communities during such events.

### Overview

This exercise is a functional activation exercise designed to test the real-time response capabilities of Local and Regional Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs and REMCs) to a simulated tsunami emergency. Unlike an incident management exercise, the focus here is on the activation and operation of local and regional Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) and the coordination between combat agency liaisons, supporting agencies, and functional coordinators within these centres. Participants will work alongside a simulated Incident Management Team (IMT) to coordinate their responses to dynamic and challenging scenarios, supporting the combat agency and community through the pre-warning, warning, impact, and very early recovery phases of the emergency.

Conducted over 4–6 hours, the exercise begins with the activation of local and regional EOCs. Participants will implement local and regional emergency plans and EOC procedures as they respond to a series of evolving scenario injects.

The exercise is geographically generic and can be tailored to reflect the unique features, risks, and communities of a specific local or regional area. It aims to evaluate the readiness, adaptability, and effectiveness of emergency plans, resource management, and response coordination. This provides an opportunity to identify procedural gaps, enhance interagency collaboration, and strengthen overall emergency management capability.

The target audience includes government and non-government agencies that would typically form 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
* Participating Organisations, as deemed appropriate by the LEMC / REMC
* Other Stakeholders as deemed appropriate by the LEMC / REMC

## Aim

1. To test the real-time response of the LEMC/REMC to a simulated tsunami emergency, in order to evaluate the committee's readiness, preparedness, and capability to manage the hazard effectively.
2. [Insert additional or alternate aim as required]

## Exercise Objectives & Standards / Measures

1. Ensure that the LEMC/REMC has procedures in place for managing tsunamis.
2. Actions and decisions taken align with key response protocols in the local/regional emergency plan
3. Actions and strategies during the exercise align with protocols and procedures outlined in the State Emergency Sub Plan
4. Actions, strategies, and tactics demonstrate a clear understanding of the emergency plans

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Evaluate the adaptability and flexibility of LEMC/REMC team members in responding to challenging or unexpected developments during the exercise.
2. Team members collaborate to identify practical actions in response to scenario developments
3. Clear direction and intent are provided to enable rapid decision-making aligned with incident objectives
4. Strategies and tactics are adapted as needed in response to incident changes.
5. Responses to changes are acknowledged quickly, with decisions made and implemented within a realistic timeframe for achievable outcomes
6. Effective communication and intelligence flow among team members occurs, to maintain situational awareness

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Verify that the structure of any activated organisation (e.g., EOC) aligns with procedures and is logical, clearly structured, and communicated to all involved.
2. EOC is established in accordance with procedures, ensuring that functions, resources, and facilities are in place according to guidelines
3. Roles are filled as outlined in procedures, with each position appropriately staffed and operational
4. Hierarchy is clearly established and communicated to all team members, defining roles, reporting lines, and decision-making authority
5. Objectives and intent are set by leadership, providing a clear direction for team actions and decision-making
6. Internal and external communication and reporting channels are established, with specific points of contact identified to facilitate information flow
7. EOC operations align with documented procedures, with actions, decisions, and processes adhering to established guidelines and protocols

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Evaluate participants' knowledge and awareness of emergency management, hazard specific and EOC procedures.
2. NSW SES is designated and recognised as the combat agency for tsunami response, with roles assigned accordingly
3. Participants initiate and follow response strategies aligned with the Tsunami Sub Plan, reflecting the plan's methodology and content in their decisions
4. Resource requests and allocations are made in accordance with the Tsunami Sub Plan, without the need for external prompts or corrections
5. Decisions, strategies, tactics and actions demonstrate adherence to hazard-specific and local / regional emergency procedures

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Assess participants' knowledge, skills, and abilities in operating within an EOC.
2. Participants correctly implement EOC activation procedures, including setting up workstations, establishing communication lines, and initiating reporting protocols
3. Roles within the EOC are clearly assigned and understood by participants, with each individual performing tasks aligned with their designated role
4. Decisions are made using established EOC decision-making frameworks, demonstrating participants’ understanding of structured processes for prioritising and delegating tasks
5. Participants effectively use EOC communication systems, such as radios, digital messaging platforms, or reporting forms, to relay information both internally and externally
6. Situational awareness is maintained through regular updates and information-sharing, with participants contributing timely and relevant data to the common operating picture
7. Participants demonstrate the ability to analyse and interpret incoming information to adjust operational strategies and provide clear, actionable directives to team members
8. EOC functions, such as resource tracking, situation monitoring, and reporting, are managed efficiently, with participants following procedural steps without needing additional guidance

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of decisions and actions in response to challenging and complex scenarios.
2. Decisions made align with EOC and incident objectives and result in measurable progress toward stabilising the scenario
3. Actions taken demonstrate adaptability and address unexpected developments without compromising operational priorities
4. Resource allocations are appropriate to the scenario's needs, with minimal resource wastage or duplication of efforts
5. Communication of decisions and actions is done so in a way that maintains situational awareness across all relevant functions within the EOC and LEMC/REMC

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Assess the suitability and adequacy of facilities, venues, and resources available during the exercise.
2. Facilities and venues support effective communication, collaboration, and operational flow, allowing participants to perform their roles without significant hindrance
3. Available resources, including equipment, technology, and supplies, are sufficient to meet the demands of the simulated emergency and exercise, with no critical shortages observed
4. Facilities and resources are adaptable to the exercise’s evolving needs, with adequate backup options in place for essential functions (e.g., power, connectivity, workspace)
5. The layout of the venue supports logical placement of teams, equipment, and EOC functions, minimising congestion and allowing clear access to necessary areas.

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Identify knowledge, skill, and capability gaps among LEMC/REMC members and develop action plans to address these gaps.
2. Gaps in knowledge, skills, or capabilities are observed and documented during the exercise, with specific instances noted where performance was hindered by these gaps
3. Instances where additional training, resources, or procedural clarification would improve performance are identified and recorded

[Insert additional standard measures as required]

1. Test interagency communication and coordination during the response.
2. Communication protocols among LEMC/REMC and EOC are established and followed consistently and in accordance with procedures
3. Inter team and agency communication is not hindered by barriers, challenges or protocols
4. Information is shared quickly and in a manner across team members, agencies, and functions with minimal need for repetition or clarification

[Add or remove objectives and 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 lessons 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.

### 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

Exercise evaluation should result in the development of an exercise report, however brief, that describes what happened, identifying good performances, opportunities for improvement and makes recommendations.

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.

## 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.

## Attachments

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