

APPROVAL OF EXERCISES AND EXERCISE REPORTS

Date: August 31, 2018

Effective: August 31, 2018

Applies to: Local Authorities in Manitoba

1. Background

The Local Authorities Emergency Planning and Preparedness Regulation (Regulation) sets out requirements for mandatory tabletop exercises and functional or full-scale exercises:

- A tabletop exercise must be conducted every year, except in a year where a functional or full-scale exercise is conducted.
- A functional or full-scale exercise must be conducted every four years.

The Regulation states that functional or full-scale scale exercises done to fulfill the regulatory requirement must be approved by Manitoba EMO as being of sufficient magnitude. It does not require that tabletop exercises done to fulfill the regulatory requirement be approved by Manitoba EMO.

The Regulation also requires that for both tabletop and functional/full-scale exercises, a local authority must provide a written report on the exercise within 90 days to Manitoba EMO. The written report must be in the form and contain the information required by Manitoba EMO.

2. Supporting Policies and Procedures

How does Manitoba EMO approve functional or full-scale exercises?

Manitoba EMO recommends that local authorities ask Manitoba EMO to review and approve functional or full-scale exercises in advance of carrying out these exercises. However, local authorities are not required to have functional or full-scale exercises approved by Manitoba EMO in advance of the exercise being carried out.

If a local authority has not requested a review in advance of the exercise, Manitoba EMO will use the post-event report to determine if the exercise is of sufficient magnitude to meet the requirements of the regulation.

A local authority that would like its exercise reviewed in advance of conducting the exercise should contact its Emergency Management Advisor. Once Manitoba EMO is satisfied that the exercise meets the requirements of the regulation, it will provide a letter advising the local authority that the exercise has been approved.

What is an “exercise of sufficient magnitude”?

The requirement for an exercise of sufficient magnitude applies to functional/full-scale exercises.

Manitoba EMO is developing guidance for local authorities on what it will consider to be an exercise of sufficient magnitude. This will help local authorities self-assess their exercises for compliance with the Regulation.

Manitoba EMO provided preliminary guidance at its 2018 workshops, noting the following characteristics:

- Emergency Management as major component – The exercise scenario should prompt a response that must be resolved by the emergency management team, rather than solely by emergency first responders. Functional/full-scale emergency management exercises typically involve operating the emergency operations centre. Other common functions might include operating a reception centre, declaring a state of local emergency, and organizing an evacuation.
- Involves assessing, decision making, determining a course of action, etc. – The exercise should provide a scenario that requires participants to make decisions. Decision making is a key activity in an emergency response as every event is different. This decision making characteristic is in contrast to a drill which does not require a scenario and simply requires participants to execute the steps.
- Might stress abilities or resources – A local authority may want to use a scenario that pushes itself beyond its comfort level or resource level to provide an opportunity for out of the box thinking.

The guidance document will build on these characteristics, providing further information and examples. In the absence of a guidance document, a local authority is encouraged to contact its Emergency Management Advisor to discuss its intended exercise.

Are multiple-local authority exercises allowed?

Yes. An exercise carried out by multiple local authorities is particularly appropriate and beneficial when the participating local authorities regularly operate together in a joint emergency operations centre with a joint team. The exercise reflects how these local authorities would operate in a real event.

A multiple-local authority exercise is also allowed for local authorities that do not regularly operate together.

Local authorities carrying out multiple-local authority exercises should make sure that each of their functions/roles in the exercise meets the requirements of an exercise of sufficient magnitude.

Are joint exercises with agencies/organizations other than local authorities allowed?

Yes. This type of joint exercise is beneficial when a local authority could reasonably expect to have to coordinate a response with the agency or organization.

A local authority participating in a joint exercise should ensure that its own function/role in the exercise meets the requirements of an exercise of sufficient magnitude.

Does a response to an emergency event replace the requirement for an exercise?

An annual exercise is required even if a local authority responded to an emergency event that year.

Exercises provide different information and experiences than emergency responses.

An exercise conducted after a response may also be quite valuable and timely to address findings from the recent emergency response.

If a local authority is concerned that it will not be able to conduct its annual exercise due to an emergency event that occurred in that calendar year, it may contact Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) to discuss a solution.

What format and content are required for the post-event report?

A post-event report is required for both tabletop and functional/full-scale exercises conducted to fulfill the requirements of the Regulation.

The post-event report submitted to Manitoba EMO should include the following topics:

- Date of Exercise
- Start Time
- End Time
- Location(s)
- Type of Exercise (tabletop, functional, full-scale)

- Exercise Objectives
- Scenario and (if applicable) Timeline of Events
- Participants (include agency and role)
- Debriefing date(s)
- Lessons Learned / Key Findings
- Plans for Improvement (optional)

Manitoba EMO is working to create a post-event report template with these topics. The template will be sent to municipal emergency coordinators and posted on the Manitoba EMO website.

How many reports should be submitted for multiple-local authority or joint exercises?

Each local authority should submit its own post-event report, regardless of whether it held a single local authority exercise, multiple-local authority exercise, or joint exercise.

Report content should reflect the perspective of the local authority that submits the report.

Does a local authority have to submit reports for every exercise it conducts in a year?

No. Some local authorities conduct multiple exercises each year. Manitoba EMO only requires a report for the exercise that municipality is conducting to meet the requirements of the Regulation.

However, if a local authority conducts multiple exercises, it should create post-event reports for each exercise to support continuous improvement. Manitoba EMO would be interested in reviewing such reports to identify best practices and track issues and trends in local authority emergency management programs.

When will Manitoba EMO start tracking whether exercises have been completed?

Manitoba EMO is currently tracking exercise completion through the reports it receives from local authorities. Many local authorities have been sending exercise reports to Manitoba EMO since the Regulation came into force in December 2016. Those local authorities that have not started carrying out exercises and completing exercise reports should start doing so in 2018.