2017 Kentucky Communication Interoperability Exercise (COMEX)

Exercise Plan

June 12-30, 2017

The Exercise Plan (ExPlan) gives elected and appointed officials, observers, media personnel, and players from participating organizations information they need to observe or participate in the exercise. Some exercise material is intended for the exclusive use of exercise planners, controllers, and evaluators, but players may view other materials that are necessary to their performance. All exercise participants may view the ExPlan.

Vers.2. May 19, 2016

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	2016 Kentucky Communication Interoperability Exercise
Exercise Dates	June 12-30, 2017
Scope	The 2017 Kentucky Communication Interoperability Exercise is being conducted over three weeks at multiple locations around the state. The exercise will test communications infrastructure within state and local agencies of the Commonwealth and it will test the ability of state and local agencies to communicate within their own agencies and with other agencies on the identified national and Kentucky mutual aid frequencies. The 2017 COMEX will include an operational scenario involving County Emergency Management Directors and state level EMAC A-Team personnel
Mission Area(s)	**Response**
Core Capabilities	Operational Communications
Objectives	See Below (Page 3)
Threat or Hazard	Non-Applicable
Scenario	The scenario component of the 2017 COMEX will involve a Severe Weather event
Sponsor	Kentucky Emergency Management

Participating Organizations	Participating Agencies
	Civil Air Patrol
	Kentucky Air Guard
	Kentucky Amateur Radio Emergency Service
	Kentucky Department for Public Health
	Kentucky Department of Environmental Protection
	Kentucky Early Warning System
	Kentucky Emergency Management
	Kentucky Fire Commission
	Kentucky Fire Marshall's Office
	Kentucky National Guard
	Kentucky State Police

	Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
	Local Kentucky Emergency Management Offices-Multiple Jurisdictions
	Louisville Metro
	Military Auxiliary Radio Service
	Private Sector Partners: Sprint, Appalachian Wireless, JPS Communications, IP Access
Point of Contact	Bobby Gillis Kentucky Division of Emergency Management Bobby.j.gillis.nfg@mail.mil

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Exercise Objectives and Core Capabilities

The following exercise objectives in Table 1 describe the expected outcomes for the exercise. The objectives are linked to core capabilities, which are distinct critical elements necessary to achieve the specific mission area(s). The objectives and aligned core capabilities are guided by elected and appointed officials and selected by the Exercise Planning Team.

Exercise Objective	Core Capability
Week 1	Operational Communications
Conduct two (2) separate Mobile Communications Vehicle/Trailer Interoperability Training and Coordination Sites across the Commonwealth	Operational Communications
Train personnel on state interoperability system and DMARCS	Operational Communications
Train personnel on ACU interoperability devices	Operational Communications
Process EMAC requests thru EMAC EOS	Operational Coordination
Follow state communications plan procedures for responding to a natural hazards event	Operational Communications
Week 2	Operational Communications
Train on TACSAT and tactical HF communications	Operational Communications
Train on multi-band PRC 152 radios for interoperability	Operational Communications
Conduct real world communications stations from four locations within the state	Operational Communications
Week 3	Operational Communications
Make contact with local EOC, 911, hospitals, local health department to communicate from one of these locations in each county back to	Operational Communications
Communicate from local County EM communications to regional area offices using DMARCs radios	Operational Communications
Communicate from local County EOCs to State EOCs using DMARCs radios	Operational Communications
Regional Area offices communicate to EOC using DMARCs radios	Operational Communications
Work with local law enforcement to select 5 public safety locations to communicate on Statewide Interoperability system	Operational Communications
Conduct DMARCs radio test with KYNG armories and state partners	Operational Communications
Emergency Communication Information Center staff will contact the lead POC in each of the ESFs. The ESF lead will contact his/her team by phone and email	Operational Communications
Use Alert Sense to contact KYEM staff, KYNG staff, and ESF partners	Operational Communications
Conduct SAT Radio and SAT phone, SAT MIFI testing	Operational Communications

Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated Core Capabilities

Participant Roles and Responsibilities

The term *participant* encompasses many groups of people, not just those playing in the exercise. Groups of participants involved in the exercise, and their respective roles and responsibilities, are as follows:

- **Players.** Players are personnel who have an active role in discussing or performing their regular roles and responsibilities during the exercise. Players discuss or initiate actions in response to the simulated emergency.

- **Controllers.** Controllers plan and manage exercise play, set up and operate the exercise site, and act in the roles of organizations or individuals that are not playing in the exercise. Controllers direct the pace of the exercise, provide key data to players, and may prompt or initiate certain player actions to ensure exercise continuity. In addition, they issue exercise material to players as required, monitor the exercise timeline, and supervise the safety of all exercise participants.

- **Simulators.** Simulators are control staff personnel who role play nonparticipating organizations or individuals. They most often operate out of the Simulation Cell (SimCell), but they may occasionally have face-to-face contact with players. Simulators function semi-independently under the supervision of SimCell controllers, enacting roles (e.g., media reporters or next of kin) in accordance with instructions provided in the Master Scenario Events List (MSEL). All simulators are ultimately accountable to the Exercise Director and Senior Controller.

- **Evaluators.** Evaluators evaluate and provide feedback on a designated functional area of the exercise. Evaluators observe and document performance against established capability targets and critical tasks, in accordance with the Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs).

- **Observers.** Observers visit or view selected segments of the exercise. Observers do not play in the exercise, nor do they perform any control or evaluation functions. Observers view the exercise from a designated observation area and must remain within the observation area during the exercise. Very Important Persons (VIPs) are also observers, but they frequently are grouped separately.

- **Support Staff.** The exercise support staff includes individuals who perform administrative and logistical support tasks during the exercise (e.g., registration, catering).

Exercise Assumptions and Artificialities

In any exercise, assumptions and artificialities may be necessary to complete play in the time allotted and/or account for logistical limitations. Exercise participants should accept that assumptions and artificialities are inherent in any exercise, and should not allow these considerations to negatively impact their participation.

Assumptions

Assumptions constitute the implied factual foundation for the exercise and, as such, are assumed to be present before the exercise starts. The following assumptions apply to the exercise:

- The exercise is conducted in a no-fault learning environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated.

- The exercise scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented.

- Exercise simulation contains sufficient detail to allow players to react to information and situations as they are presented as if the simulated incident were real.

- Participating agencies may need to balance exercise play with real-world emergencies. Real-world emergencies take priority.

Artificialities

During this exercise, the following artificialities apply:

- Exercise communication and coordination is limited to participating exercise organizations, venues, and the SimCell.

EXERCISE LOGISTICS

Safety

Exercise participant safety takes priority over exercise events. The following general requirements apply to the exercise:

- A Safety Controller is responsible for participant safety; any safety concerns must be immediately reported to the Safety Controller. The Safety Controller and Exercise Director will determine if a real-world emergency warrants a pause in exercise play and when exercise play can be resumed.

- For an emergency that requires assistance, use the phrase **"real-world emergency."** The following procedures should be used in case of a real emergency during the exercise:

  - Anyone who observes a participant who is seriously ill or injured will immediately notify emergency services and the closest controller, and, within reason and training, render aid.

  - The controller aware of a real emergency will initiate the "real-world emergency" broadcast and provide the Safety Controller, Senior Controller, and Exercise Director with the location of the emergency and resources needed, if any. The Senior Controller will notify the Control Cell as soon as possible if a real emergency occurs.

- Safety Controllers for each of the exercise locations are identified below:
  - Pike County
    - Chris Hecker
    - Cell: 606-434-7325
  - Caldwell County
    - Jeremy Blansett
    - Cell: 270-252-5386

Fire Safety

Standard fire and safety regulations relevant to respective exercise sites will be followed during the exercise.

Emergency Medical Services

Kentucky Emergency Management will coordinate with local emergency medical services in the event of a real-world emergency.

Weapons Policy

All participants will follow the relevant weapons policy for the exercising organization or exercise venue.

POST-EXERCISE AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Debriefings

Post-exercise debriefings aim to collect sufficient relevant data to support effective evaluation and improvement planning.

Facilitator and Evaluator Debriefing

Following the exercise the exercise planning team will attend a facilitated exercise debriefing. During this debriefing, controllers and evaluators provide an overview of their observed functional areas and discuss strengths and areas for improvement.

Participant Feedback Forms

Participant Feedback Forms provide players with the opportunity to comment candidly on exercise activities and exercise design. Participant Feedback Forms will be completed online at the KYEM Website.

Evaluation

Exercise Evaluation Guides

EEGs assist evaluators in collecting relevant exercise observations. EEGs document exercise objectives and aligned core capabilities, capability targets, and critical tasks. Each EEG provides evaluators with information on what they should expect to see demonstrated in their functional

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areas. The EEGs, coupled with Participant Feedback Forms and Hot Wash notes, are used to evaluate the exercise and compile the After-Action Report (AAR).

After-Action Report

The AAR summarizes key information related to evaluation. The AAR primarily focuses on the analysis of core capabilities, including capability performance, strengths, and areas for improvement. AARs also include basic exercise information, including the exercise name, type of exercise, dates, location, participating organizations, mission area(s), specific threat or hazard, a brief scenario description, and the name of the exercise sponsor and POC.

Improvement Planning

Improvement planning is the process by which the observations recorded in the AAR are resolved through development of concrete corrective actions, which are prioritized and tracked as a part of a continuous corrective action program.

After-Action Meeting

The After-Action Meeting (AAM) is a meeting held among decision- and policy-makers from the exercising organizations, as well as the Lead Evaluator and members of the Exercise Planning Team, to debrief the exercise and to review and refine the draft AAR and Improvement Plan (IP). The AAM should be an interactive session, providing attendees the opportunity to discuss and validate the observations and corrective actions in the draft AAR/IP.

Improvement Plan

The IP identifies specific corrective actions, assigns them to responsible parties, and establishes target dates for their completion. It is created by elected and appointed officials from the organizations participating in the exercise, and discussed and validated during the AAM.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Exercise Rules

The following general rules govern exercise play:

- Real-world emergency actions take priority over exercise actions.

- Exercise players will comply with real-world emergency procedures, unless otherwise directed by the control staff.

- All communications (including written, radio, telephone, and e-mail) during the exercise will begin and end with the statement **"This is an exercise."**

- Exercise players who place telephone calls or initiate radio communication with the SimCell must identify the organization or individual with whom they wish to speak.

Players Instructions

Players should follow certain guidelines before, during, and after the exercise to ensure a safe and effective exercise.

Before the Exercise

- Review the Exercise Schedule (see COMEX website, Annex A-D) and appropriate organizational plans, procedures, and exercise support documents.

During the Exercise

- Respond to exercise events and information as if the emergency were real, unless otherwise directed by an exercise controller.

- Controllers will give you only information they are specifically directed to disseminate. You are expected to obtain other necessary information through existing emergency information channels.

- Do not engage in personal conversations with controllers, evaluators, observers, or media personnel. If you are asked an exercise-related question, give a short, concise answer. If you are busy and cannot immediately respond, indicate that, but report back with an answer as soon as possible.

- If you do not understand the scope of the exercise, or if you are uncertain about an organization's participation in an exercise, ask a controller.

- Parts of the scenario may seem implausible. Recognize that the exercise has objectives to satisfy and may require incorporation of unrealistic aspects. Every effort has been made by the exercise's trusted agents to balance realism with safety and to create an effective learning and evaluation environment.

- All exercise communications will begin and end with the statement **"This is an exercise."** This precaution is taken so that anyone who overhears the conversation will not mistake exercise play for a real-world emergency.

- When you communicate with the SimCell, identify the organization or individual with whom you wish to speak.

- Speak when you take an action. This procedure will ensure that evaluators are aware of critical actions as they occur.

- Maintain a log of your activities. Many times, this log may include documentation of activities that were missed by a controller or evaluator.

After the Exercise

- Participate in the Hot Wash at your venue with controllers and evaluators.

- Complete the online Participant Feedback Form. This form allows you to comment candidly on emergency response activities and exercise effectiveness. Provide the completed form to a controller or evaluator.

- Provide any notes or materials generated from the exercise to your controller or evaluator for review and inclusion in the AAR.

ANNEX A: ACRONYMS

Acronym	Term
COMEX	Communications Exercise
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DMARCS	Department of Military Affairs Radio Communication System
ESF	Emergency Support Function
ExPlan	Exercise Plan
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
MSAT	Mobile Satellite Radio
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point
SimCell	Simulation Cell
SME	Subject Matter Expert
TOC	Tactical Operations Center