



Sleeper & Stoutland Volunteer Fire Departments Search & Rescue Full-Scale Exercise

After-Action Report/Improvement Plan

May 30, 2023

The After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) aligns exercise objectives with preparedness doctrine to include the National Preparedness Goal and related frameworks and guidance. Exercise information required for preparedness reporting and trend analysis is included; users are encouraged to add additional sections as needed to support their own organizational needs.

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EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	Sleeper & Stoutland Volunteer Fire Departments Search & Rescue (S&R) Full-Scale Exercise (FSE)
Exercise Dates	20 May 2023
Scope	This exercise is a full-scale exercise, planned for 6 hours in Camdenton, MO. Exercise play is limited to the scenario present within this manual and participating organization's plans, policies, and procedures.
Mission Area(s)	Response
Core Capabilities	Operational Coordination, Operational Communication, Planning, Situational Assessment
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test and validate existing operational procedures for Sleeper & Stoutland Volunteer Fire Departments (SSVFD), the Camden County, MO Emergency Management Agency (EMA), and the Camden County, MO Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)• Validate procedures to establish Incident Command System and assign roles, assess plans, and protocols for communicating between the Command Post (CP), Staging, and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)• Evaluate the steps/processes for handling S&R incidents
Threat or Hazard	Weather conditions, lost person(s), wildlife, external persons not involved in the exercise, steep terrain
Scenario	A 30-year-old female hiker lost in Ha Ha Tonka State Park. Informed family she should be back at about 7 am. Last seen in the parking area near Devil's Kitchen Trail. Missing approximately two hours.
Sponsor	Sleeper & Stoutland Volunteer Fire Departments

**Participating
Organizations**

1 federal, 2 county, and 5 local organizations participated. See Appendix B for the full list.

**Point of
Contact
and
Facilitator**

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ANALYSIS OF CORE CAPABILITIES

Aligning exercise objectives and core capabilities provides a consistent taxonomy for evaluation that transcends individual exercises to support preparedness reporting and trend analysis. Table 1 includes the exercise objectives, aligned core capabilities, and performance ratings for each core capability as observed during the exercise and determined by the evaluation team.

Objective	Core Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)
Test and validate existing operational procedures for SSVFD, the EMA, and CERT	Planning, Operational Coordination		S		
Validate procedures to establish Incident Command System and assign roles, assess plans, and protocols for communicating between the Command Post (CP), Staging, and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)	Planning, Operation Communication		S		
Evaluate the steps/processes for handling S&R incidents	Situational Assessment		S		

Ratings Definitions:

- Performed without Challenges (P): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.
- Performed with Some Challenges (S): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not

Objective	Core Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)
<p>contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. However, opportunities to enhance effectiveness and/or efficiency were identified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Performed with Major Challenges (M): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s), but some or all of the following were observed: demonstrated performance had a negative impact on the performance of other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers; and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. ● Unable to be Performed (U): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were not performed in a manner that achieved the objective(s). 					

Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance

The following sections provide an overview of the performance related to each exercise objective and associated core capability, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Test and validate existing operational procedures for SSVFD, the EMA, and CERT

The strengths and areas for improvement for each core capability aligned to this objective are described in this section.

Planning

Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

Strength 1: SSVFD and the EMA have plans in place for S&R response.

Strength 2: Leadership was aware of plan and procedures

Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

Area for Improvement 1: Loose training and unwritten rules or plans need to be turned into proper plans.

Reference: Fire Department SOGs, Fire Department Mutual Aid Agreements, Camden County Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP)

Analysis: Have plans readily available and accessible before, during, and after training, events, and exercises; make sure plans are provided to everyone, not just leadership.

Operational Coordination

Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

Strength 1: S&R response is operated under an established Incident Command Post.

Strength 2: As an established, regularly-occurring incident, responder agencies have extensive experience working together on S&R.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

Area for Improvement 1: More training is recommended on operational coordination because of high turnover rate in emergency services.

Reference: Fire Department SOGs, Fire Department Mutual Aid Agreements, LEOP

Analysis: Plans exist within each of the participating organizations for S&R response. While leadership in the organizations is aware of the plans, other participants within and outside of the individual organizations have little training and knowledge of each other's plans. Providing and training on the plans during non-emergency times will help to expedite the process to rescue those who are lost and/or injured.

Validate procedures to assess plans and protocols for communicating between the Command Post (CP), Staging, and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

The strengths and areas for improvement for each core capability aligned to this objective are described in this section.

Operational Communication

Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

Strength 1: Radios provided for the exercise are available for any first responder agency to use at any time.

Strength 2: LEOP ESF-2 is in place to establish communications guidelines.

Strength 3: Pre-existing relationships created a cooperative environment, including the necessity of relying on amateur radio when responders were unable to maintain communications on agency radios.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

Area for Improvement 1: Have radios programmed with all available frequencies needed among responder agencies.

Reference: State Interoperability plan, Lake Area Interoperability plan, Camden County LEOP

Analysis: With the cost to reprogram existing radios capable of digital communications, it is difficult for FRs (especially fully volunteer agencies) to find funding to have radios reprogrammed. It is even harder for some agencies to find funding to upgrade outdated radio equipment.

Area for Improvement 2: FRs rely heavily on Central Dispatch, who should in turn rely on EMA to assist with resource tracking, logistics, and information sharing.

Reference: Camden County LEOP

Analysis: FRs basic knowledge and training for communications revolves around contacting Central Dispatch. In order for information to flow smoothly and help to alleviate some of the responsibility for tracking resources, managing logistics, and sharing information among all levels of responding agencies and public/private

sector, Central Dispatch should ideally be in regular communication with the EMA during a large-scale event.

Area for Improvement 3: Agencies need more ways to communicate in the field.

Reference: LEOP, Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) SOGs

Analysis: FRs should consider earning their amateur radio licenses so they have another option to use for communications if all else fails.

Planning

Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

Strength 1: Mobile radios provided better communications than handhelds.

Strength 2: County equipment was available and utilized.

Strength 3: Plans to test and use amateur radio were already in place before the exercise.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

Area for Improvement 1: Temporary frequencies and equipment used.

Reference: Fire Department SOGs, Fire Department Mutual Aid Agreements, LEOP - (<https://samsblog167959092.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/00-full-leop-2022.pdf>),

Analysis: While equipment and temporary frequencies were used by players, a succinct, dependable communications plan needs to be developed and implemented. It also needs to be adopted by the agencies and shared for quicker deployment and easier access in the field. Agencies should acquire equipment capable of supporting the communications plan.

Evaluate the steps/processes for handling S&R incidents

The strengths and areas for improvement for each core capability aligned to this objective are described in this section.

Situational Assessment

Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

Strength 1: Teams were situationally aware of hazards, resources, and steps for extracting victims during the scenario.

Strength 2: Teams interacted well, understanding team members' strengths and weaknesses

Strength 3: Understanding possible injuries ahead of finding victims was instrumental in preparing to extract victims.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

Area for Improvement 1: Write down the SOGs and distribute them to the departments.

Reference: County LEOP, FRs SOGs

Analysis: While there are general S&R guidelines widely established and adopted by the fire service, the FRs involved need to put their particular guidelines in writing and make sure all department personnel have access and training to support the guidelines.

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APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This IP has been developed specifically for Camden County as a result of Emergency Services Sector Full-Scale Exercise conducted on May 20, 2023.

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element ¹	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
Core Capability 1: Operational Communication	1. Have radios programmed with all available frequencies needed among responder agencies.	Get access to updated list of frequencies		SSVFD	James Vaughn 4172881387	June 1, 2023	September 1, 2023
		Have radios reprogrammed		SSVFD	James Vaughn 4172881387	September 1, 2023	September 1, 2025
	2. SSVFD relies heavily on Central Dispatch for resource tracking, logistics, and information sharing.	SSVFD have access to the EMA to assist with resource tracking, logistics, and information sharing.		SSVFD	James Vaughn 4172881387	June 1, 2023	December 1, 2023

¹ Capability Elements are: Planning, Organization, Equipment, Training, or Exercise.

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element ¹	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
	3. Agencies need more ways to communicate in the field.	SSVFD should consider amateur radio licenses so they have another option to use for communications if all else fails.		SSVFD	James Vaughn 4172881387	June 1, 2023	June 1, 2024
Core Capability 2: Operational Coordination	1. More training is recommended on operational coordination because of high turnover rate in emergency services.	Plans exist within each of the participating organizations for S&R response. While leadership in the organizations is aware of the plans, other participants within and outside of the individual organizations have little		SSVFD	James Vaughn 4172881387	June 1, 2023	June 1, 2024

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element ¹	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
		training and knowledge of each other's plans. Providing and training on the plans during non-emergency times will help to expedite the process to rescue those who are lost and/or injured.					
Core Capability 3: Planning	1. Loose training and unwritten rules or plans need to be turned into proper plans.	Have plans readily available and accessible before, during, and after training, events, and exercises; make sure plans are provided to everyone, not just leadership.		SSVFD	James Vaughn 4172881387	June 1, 2023	June 1, 2024
	2. Temporary frequencies and	While equipment and temporary frequencies were used by players, a succinct,		SSVFD	James Vaughn 4172881387	June 1, 2023	December 1, 2023

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element ¹	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
	equipment used.	dependable communications plan needs to be developed and implemented. It also needs to be adopted by the agencies and shared for quicker deployment and easier access in the field. Agencies should acquire equipment capable of supporting the communications plan.					
Core Capability 4: Situational Assessment	1. Write down the SOGs and distribute them to the departments.	While there are general S&R guidelines widely established and adopted by the fire		SSVFD	James Vaughn 4172881387	June 1, 2023	June 1, 2024

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element ¹	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
		service, the FRs involved need to put their particular guidelines in writing and make sure all department personnel have access and training to support the guidelines.					

APPENDIX B: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

Participating Organizations	
Federal	
	U.S. National Weather Service - Springfield office
State	
County	
	Camden County EMA
	Camden County CERT
	Camden County ARES
	Morgan County EMA
City	
	Sleeper and Stoutland Volunteer Fire Departments
Others	
	Lake of the Ozarks Amateur Radio Club