



**Homeland  
Security**

# Sector-Specific Tabletop Exercise Program

## Overview

The Sector-Specific Tabletop Exercise Program (SSTEP) is designed to help critical infrastructure owners and operators design their own tabletop exercises to meet the needs of their facilities and stakeholders. The SSTEP allows users to leverage pre-built exercise templates and tailor them to their communities' specific needs in order to assess, develop, and update emergency plans, programs, policies and procedures. This program provides exercise planners with tools, scenarios, and question sets, and guidance in developing a discussion-based exercise. There are over 30 SSTEP exercise templates, each designed for the unique needs of a specific sector or to address a particular cross-sector threat or hazard.

## Background and Details

The SSTEP is an all-hazards risk management tool that has been tailored and used by several U.S. critical infrastructure sectors, including the Dams Sector, the Chemical Sector, and multiple Commercial Facilities Subsectors. The SSTEP materials provide a model exercise and support documentation that can be refined and further developed to exercise and evaluate specific areas of concern for critical infrastructure owners and operators.

## SSTEP Contents

- **Welcome Letter** - The official introduction letter of the SSTEP which includes a brief description of the included documents, points of contact from the host party and is signed by the senior official authorizing the approval of its use.
- **Invitation Letter** - A template of an official invitation letter that is sent to exercise participants.
- **Exercise Brief Slide Deck** - A PowerPoint Presentation, used in conjunction with the Situation Manual, that the exercise facilitator uses to guide players through scenario modules and discussion questions.
- **Exercise Planner Handbook** - A guide for the exercise planner. This document provides step-by-step instructions on how to plan, develop, and execute the tabletop exercise.
- **Facilitator & Evaluator Handbook** - A guide for the facilitators and evaluators/data collectors. This document provides instructions and examples for facilitators and evaluators/data collectors to assist in capturing information and feedback during the exercise for developing the After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP).
- **Situation Manual (SitMan)** - A manual that provides the scenario, supporting background information, and suggested discussion questions to be posed to the exercise players. Throughout the exercise, players should be encouraged to use the manual to help supplement the information in the Exercise Brief Slide Deck.
- **Participant Feedback Form** - A form that is used after the exercise to gather information from exercise players, such as recommendations and key outcomes from the exercise as well as feedback on the exercise design and conduct.
- **Exercise Planner Feedback Form** - A feedback form used by the exercise planners and the facilitator to consolidate players' feedback on exercise improvement.
- **After-Action Report/Improvement Plan** - A template of an AAR/IP to aid the exercise planner and evaluators/data collectors in developing an HSEEP-style AAR/IP.

## Availability

SSTEP exercise templates are available for the following sectors and scenarios:

<b>Chemical</b> – Cyber-Attack, Domestic Terrorism	<b>Commercial Facilities</b> – Gaming Industry, Lodging Subsector, Outdoor Events, Retail Subsector, Sports Leagues, Sports Facilities	<b>Communications</b>
<b>Critical Manufacturing</b> – Cyber-Attack, Supply Chain Border Closure	<b>Dams</b> – Active Shooter, Adversarial Threat	<b>Defense Industrial Base</b>
<b>Emergency Services</b> - Cyber	<b>Energy–Electricity</b> – Energy Electric Substation, Energy Electricity, Energy-Electricity Subsector Substation Active Shooter	<b>Energy-Oil and Natural Gas</b> – Natural Gas Subsector Cyber, Petroleum Subsector Cyber
<b>Food &amp; Agriculture</b> – Food and Ag	<b>Government Facilities</b> – Government Facilities, National Icons and Monuments	<b>Financial Services</b> – Banking and Finance
<b>Information Technology</b> - IT	<b>Nuclear</b>	<b>Healthcare &amp; Public Health</b> – Bioterrorism, Cyber
<b>Water</b> – Water and Wastewater Systems	<b>Non-Sector Specific (Natural Hazards)</b> – Major Earthquake, Tornado (Twisted Fate)	<b>Non-Sector Specific (Threat-based)</b> – Violent Extremist, Faith-Based Organizations
<b>Transportation</b> – Maritime Transportation		

SSTEP exercise templates are available for download on the [Homeland Security Information Network – Critical Infrastructure \(HSIN-CI\)](#) website and by email request to [sopd.exercise@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:sopd.exercise@hq.dhs.gov).

## Impact on Security and Resilience

The ability for public and private sector organizations to plan and execute Homeland Security Tabletop Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)-based exercises will continue to enhance security and resilience by enabling these organizations to identify strengths and areas for improvement within their operating plans, techniques and procedures. Identified areas for improvement are then developed into an improvement plan that clearly outlines those measures necessary to improve on current concepts.

## Access to HSIN-CI

Access to the Homeland Security Information Network-Critical Infrastructure (HSIN-CI) is available for qualified Critical Infrastructure sector owners and operators. If you currently do not have a HSIN-CI account and wish to gain access, please email your name, employer, work email address, and associated sector to [HSINCI@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:HSINCI@hq.dhs.gov).

For password reset or technical assistance, please contact the HSIN Helpdesk at (866) 430-0162 or send an email to [HSIN.helpdesk@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:HSIN.helpdesk@hq.dhs.gov).

## Contact Information

For more information on the Sector-Specific Tabletop Exercise Program, please contact the exercise team at [sopd.exercise@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:sopd.exercise@hq.dhs.gov).

## Date Updated

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