

Mass Rescue Operations Preparedness

Fundamentals of Preparing
for an MRO Event



Purpose and Intent

Conduct well coordinated operations safely and securely to effectively use all available resources to save or mitigate the loss of life, property, and damage to the environment concluding with recovery to normal operations

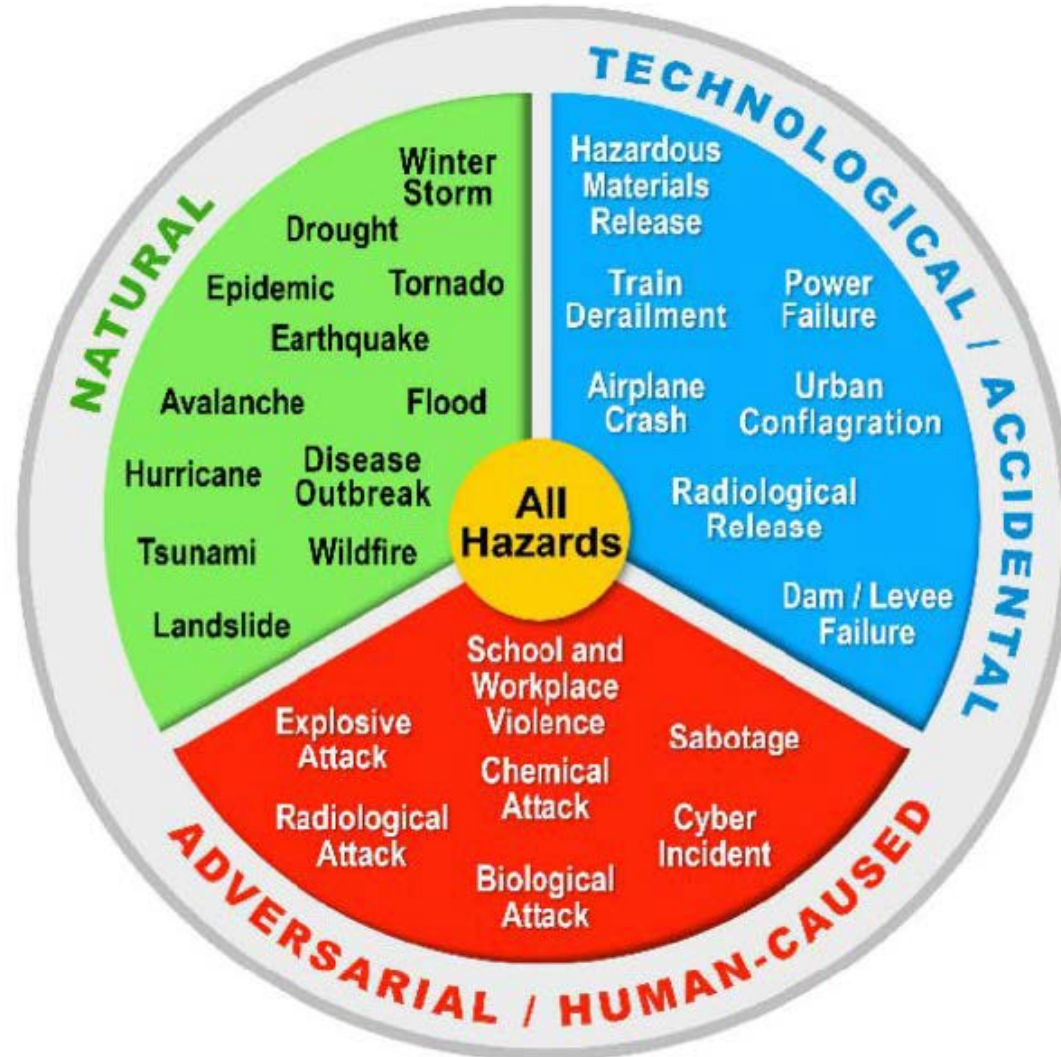


Risk Types

Potential risks are dependent on operations within the area of responsibility

Risk =

Threat x Vulnerability x Impact



Preparedness

Prevention + Partnership + Planning + Practice = Preparedness

Prevention: Maintain compliance with safety and security standards. Identify hazards & implement mitigating measures. (Security, cyber, heavy weather, vessel traffic, challenging Navigation area)

Partnership: Identify those within your operating area that may call upon you or that you would call upon during an event. (competitors, local communities, various emergency responding agencies) Formalize these relationships with mutual assistance agreements, familiarization, exercises, etc.

Planning: Identify MRO scenarios and plan accordingly

Practice: Train all personnel and partners for an efficient, effective, and cooperative response. (Preferably utilize a unified command)

Practice, Practice, Practice, and Exercise Your Plans!



Prevention

How do we prevent or mitigate risks?

Identify hazards early and implement proactive measures through our collaborative efforts.



Prevention

Governance

Emerges from gaps identified in standards/processes-shapes laws, regulations, policy

Compliance

The act of meeting requirements set by governance

Accountability

The enforcement layer that keeps governance and compliance connected and functioning together



Prevention

Governance

(Laws, Regs, MOUs, Policy, Standards, Procedures)

- Lifesaving Equipment
- Stability guidance/books
- Modification approval
- Safety Mgmt System
- Crowd Control
- Communications (weather)
- Firefighting Equipment
- Seaworthiness
- Design Review
- Crew drills/training
- Departure Briefs
- Passenger Terminals

Compliance

- Trained & Qualified Inspections/Exams/Surveys
- SMS Audits
- Subsidies for Lifesaving equipment purchases and new “fit for purpose” vessel purchases
- Vessel owners and operators

Accountability

- Vessel Operational Controls
- Investigations/Lessons Learned/Governance Review
- Prosecution
- Fines
- Jail
- Insurance fees
- Lawsuits from Victims



IMO & ICAO Key Governing Instruments

Layer	Instrument	Focus
Governance	SOLAS Ch. V; SAR Convention (1979)	Foundational maritime SAR obligations
Governance	IAMSAR Manual — amended by MSC.1/Circ.1686	Joint IMO/ICAO reference manual, most recent update
Governance	ICAO Annex 12, 9th Edition (Jul 2024)	Superseded 8th Ed.; effective 28 Nov 2024
Governance (MRO-Specific)	COMSAR/Circ.31	Direct IMO guidance for mass rescue operations
Compliance	MSC.1/Circ.1079 Rev.1; MSC.1/Circ.1182 Rev.1	SAR–passenger ship cooperation plans; recovery techniques
Compliance	Res. MSC.167(78); Res. A.949(23)	Treatment of persons rescued at sea; places of refuge
Compliance	ICAO Annex 12 §2.1.1	Required elements of state SAR organization
Accountability	IMSAS / USOAP Audits	Verify actual state implementation (maritime / aviation)
Accountability	Casualty Investigation Code	Post-incident review feeds findings back into governance



Partnerships

Can we successfully prepare for or manage a MRO alone?

No, Together we are more capable and resilient.



Partnerships

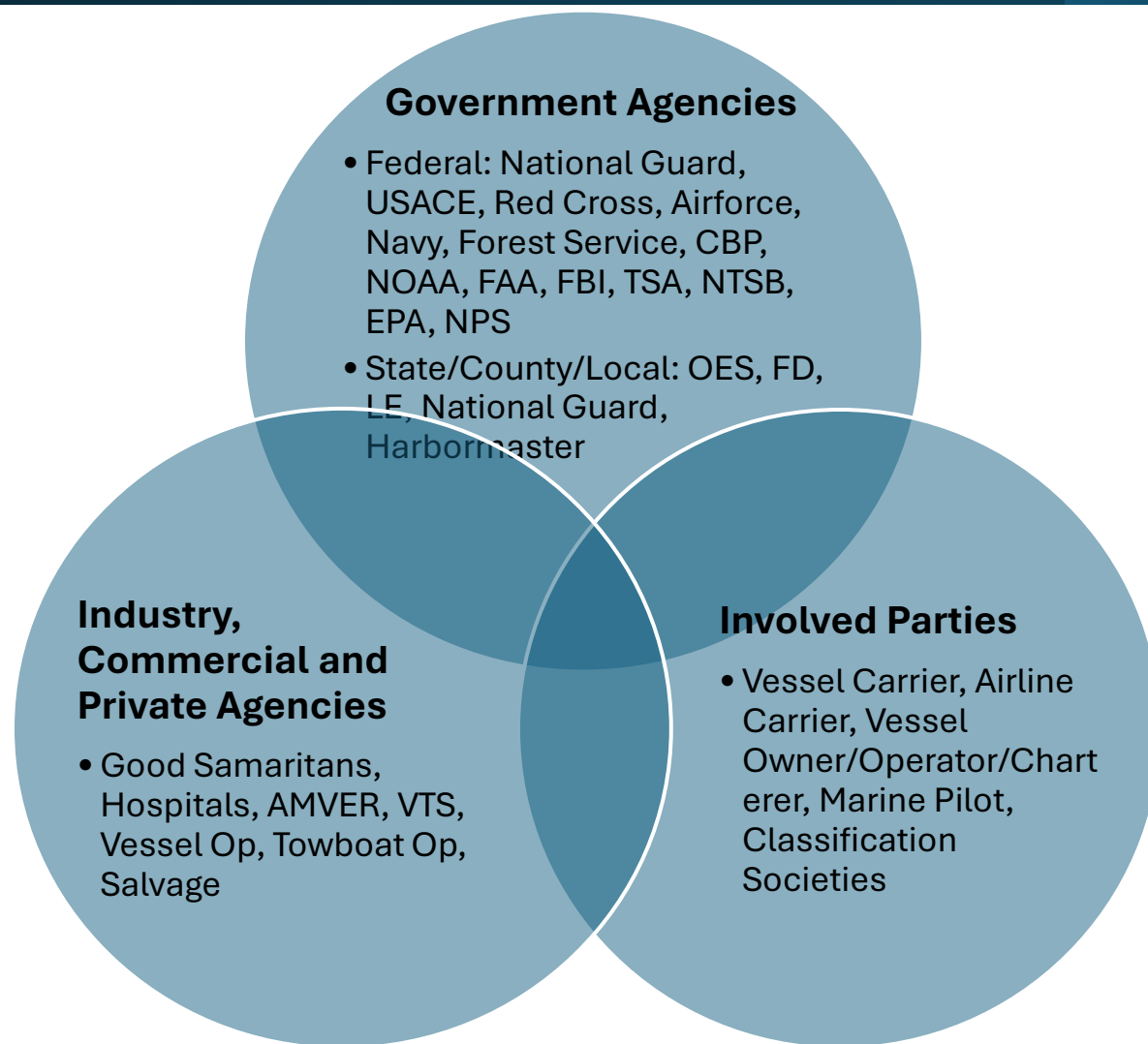
ICAO Regional Workshops

Host local responders

Conduct exercises



Whole-of-Community Preparedness





MRO Assistance in Foreign Waters

USCG District Command Center will coordinate activities with other nation's response agency (Coast Guard/Navy) and U.S. Defense Attache Office (USDAO)



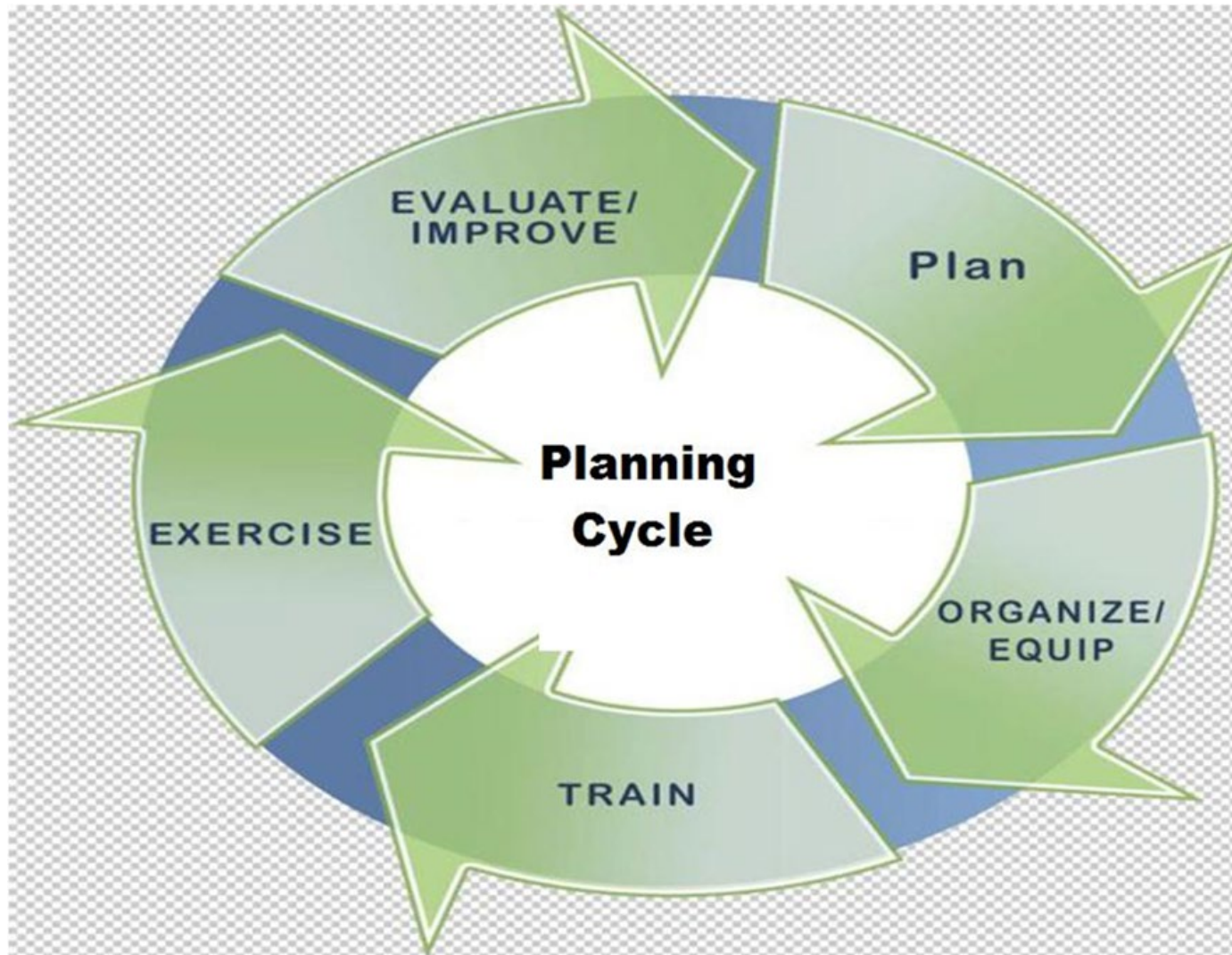
Planning

How does planning support our response efforts?

It is the critical link that translates chaos into coordinated action.



Planning Cycle



MRO Guidance for Planning & Exercises

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

Foundational governance architecture

International Framework

What we must achieve



Domestic Execution

How we will achieve

Incident Command System (ICS) → Unified Command (UC):
Same structure, same operational language, single cohesive response



MRO Contingency Plans

MRO plan ↔ Response plan

Plan must be flexible for a variety of possible scenarios

Risk & gap analysis - Identify capabilities and responsibilities, resolve gaps, eliminate duplicating responsibilities

Structures for command, control, and communications

Simultaneous operations- Air, Sea, Land



Planning & Resource Gap Analysis

Strategy
Bridge SAR↔MRO
Capabilities

Strategic
Contingency
Framework

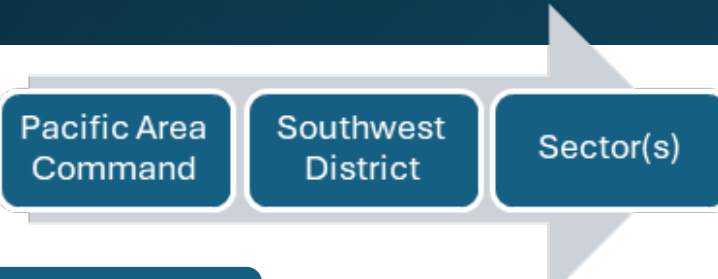
Pre-identify
Resource Gaps

Structuring
Command (Unified
Command
Interoperability)

Reducing Decision
Latency



MRO Contingency Plans



MRO concept of operations

Identified risks

Unique risks (remote areas, limited SAR resources)

Roles, Jurisdiction, Authorities

Responsibilities

Asset types (capabilities and limitations)

Additional response resources

Coordination instructions between partners

Communication's plan

Landing sites/places of safety details

Agency/partner representatives contact information

Notifications

Accountability

Joint Information Center

Decedent affairs



Practice

Why do we exercise the plan?

Because a plan only truly exists if coordination, communication, and decision-making has been tested under realistic pressure of a simulated crisis.



MRO Contingency Exercises



MRO Contingency Exercises

Discussion Based

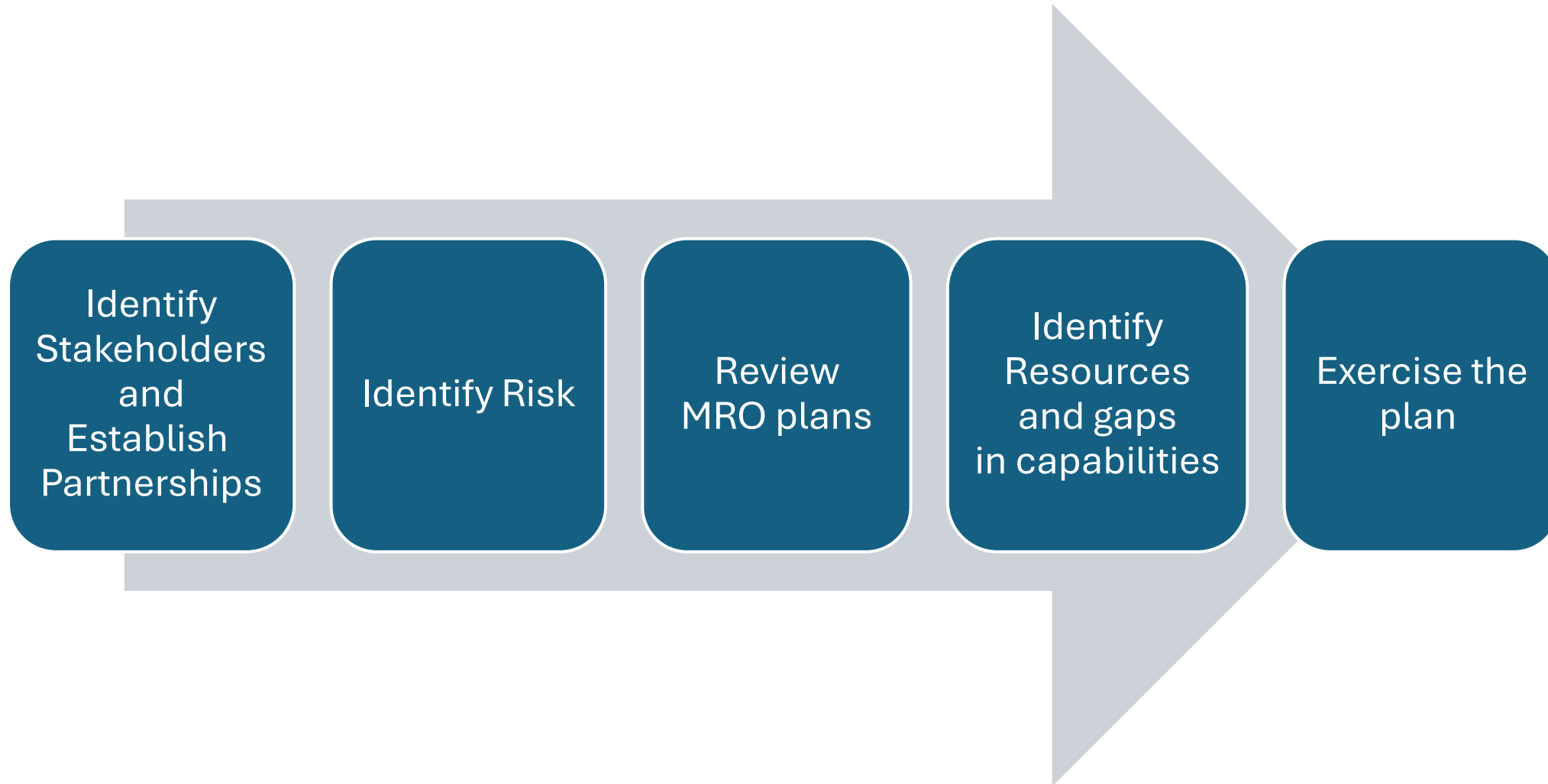
- Seminar (SEM): SAR/MRO information is shared
- Workshop (WS): Plan or Governance is developed, use case studies & scenarios
- Tabletop (TTX): Consider SAR/MRO scenario(s), discuss response actions, identify capability gaps, share recommendations
- Games: gameboards and representative assets allow us to envision resource constraints and time limitations

Operational Based

- Drill: Select individual SAR/MRO functions are tested in the field
- Functional Exercise (FE): Command and control is tested with injects
- Full-Scale Exercise (FSE): Extensive command and control and field level asset deployment



Planning an Exercise



Planning an Exercise

Identify vessel operators and partners within the response community

Hold planning meetings

Choose scenario and objectives to test

Engage and educate the local community

Establish a unified command structure with representatives from each level of government

Develop communication protocols and ensure interoperability among agencies

Plan resource allocation and identify staging/landing areas

Conduct risk assessments and identify potential hazards

Develop a plan for post-rescue recovery efforts

Establish procedures for reuniting families and individuals affected by the incident



Conducting Exercise

Gather players and execute the exercise scenario

Establish a Joint Operations Center (JOC) for real-time coordination

Conduct regular briefings and updates with all involved parties

Share information on available resources, capabilities, and limitations

Have evaluators in place to record actions/decisions made

Conduct post exercise debrief/hotwash

Evaluate and refine the mass rescue plans based on lessons learned



Summary – MRO Preparedness

- Preparation requires dedicated effort across the 4 P's: Prevention, Partnership, Planning, and Practice
- Build and Sustain a strong, proactive safety culture throughout the whole-of-community
- Regularly update, test, and validate your MRO plans with all response partners
- Remember: The planning process is just as important as the plan itself

Strive for continual improvement!

