

2025 - 2026 CMS Exercise Series Tabletop Exercise: Cascading Failures

Situation Manual

Tuesday, January 13th (Roanoke)

Wednesday, January 14th (Roanoke)

Thursday, January 15th (Abingdon)

This Situation Manual (SitMan) provides exercise participants with all the necessary tools for their roles in the exercise. Some exercise material is intended for the exclusive use of exercise planners, facilitators, and evaluators, but players may view other materials that are necessary to their performance. All exercise participants may view the SitMan.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	2025-2026 CMS Exercise Series Tabletop Exercise – Cascading Failures
Exercise Dates	Tuesday, January 13 th (Roanoke) Wednesday, January 14 th (Roanoke) Thursday, January 15 th (Abingdon)
Scope	This exercise is an in-person tabletop exercise, planned for four hours. Participants may choose between three available exercise dates.
Focus Area(s)	Response and Recovery
Capabilities	ASPR Capability 2: Health Care and Medical Response Coordination Capability 3: Continuity of Health Care Service Delivery
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the effectiveness and timeliness of internal and external notification procedures during an emergency scenario. 2. Demonstrate the facility's ability to make informed decisions regarding emergency plan activation based on situational awareness, risk assessment, and organizational thresholds. 3. Practice coordination with local, regional, and state partners, including public health, emergency management, and other healthcare entities. 4. Validate the facility's readiness measures, including staffing plans, resource allocation, patient care continuity, and safety protocols.
Threat or Hazard	Severe Weather
Scenario	The remnants of a tropical storm system are forecasted to stall over the region, bringing 12–18 inches of rain over a 48-hour period. Although the system has weakened since making landfall, it still carries significant moisture. As the storm system moves into the region, the mountainous terrain intensifies rainfall, leading to widespread concerns about flash flooding and landslides. The National Weather Service (NWS) issues a Flash Flood Watch, followed by Flood Warnings for multiple counties as rainfall rates exceed projections.
Sponsor	Southwest Virginia Healthcare Coalition (SVHC)
Participating Jurisdictions/ Organizations	See Appendix B

Point of Contact

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Exercise Objectives and Capabilities

The following exercise objectives in Table 1 describe the expected outcomes for the exercise. The objectives are linked to capabilities, which are the means to accomplish a mission, function, or objective based on the performance of related tasks, under specified conditions, to target levels of performance. The objectives and aligned capabilities are guided by senior leaders and selected by the Exercise Planning Team.

Exercise Objectives	Capability
Assess the effectiveness and timeliness of internal and external notification procedures during an emergency scenario.	Capability 2: Health Care and Medical Response Coordination
Demonstrate the facility’s ability to make informed decisions regarding emergency plan activation based on situational awareness, risk assessment, and organizational thresholds.	Capability 3: Continuity of Health Care Service Delivery
Practice coordination with local, regional, and state partners, including public health, emergency management, and other healthcare entities.	Capability 2: Health Care and Medical Response Coordination
Validate the facility’s readiness measures, including staffing plans, resource allocation, patient care continuity, and safety protocols.	Capability 3: Continuity of Health Care Service Delivery

Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated 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:** 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.
- Observers:** Do not directly participate in the exercise. However, they may support the development of player responses to the situation during the discussion by asking relevant questions or providing subject matter expertise.
- Facilitators:** Provide situation updates and moderate discussions. They also provide additional information or resolve questions as required. Key Exercise Planning Team members also may assist with facilitation as subject matter experts (SMEs) during the exercise.

- **Evaluators:** Are assigned to observe and document certain objectives during the exercise. Their primary role is to document player discussions, including how and if those discussions conform to plans, policies, and procedures.

Exercise Structure

This exercise will be a multimedia, facilitated exercise. Players will participate in the following three modules:

- Module 1: Emergency Notification Protocols
- Module 2: Activation and Decision-Making
- Module 3: Coordination and Preparedness Actions

Each module begins with a multimedia update that summarizes key events occurring within that time period. After the updates, participants review the situation and engage in group discussions if appropriate. Participants will be grouped according to the facility's health district. Once assigned during Module 1, you will remain in the same group for all three modules.

After these group discussions, participants will engage in a moderated discussion in which the facilitator from each group will share key insights and actions discussed in each group based on the scenario.

Exercise Guidelines

- This exercise will be held in an open, no-fault environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
- Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (i.e., you may use only existing assets) and insights derived from your training.
- Decisions are not precedent setting and may not reflect your jurisdiction's/organization's final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions.
- Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve Response and Recovery efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus.
- The assumption is that the exercise scenario is plausible and events occur as they are presented. All players will receive information at the same time.

Exercise Evaluation

Evaluation of the exercise is based on the exercise objectives and aligned capabilities, capability targets, and critical tasks, which are documented in Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs). Evaluators have EEGs for each of their assigned areas. Additionally, players will be asked to complete participant feedback forms. These documents, coupled with facilitator

observations and notes, will be used to evaluate the exercise and compile the After-Action Report (AAR)/Improvement Plan (IP).

- [Exercise Evaluation Guides \(EEGs\) Templates](#)

MODULE 1: EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION PROTOCOLS

Scenario

Approximately 24 hours before expected landfall, The National Weather Service (NWS) issues a Flash Flood Watch as the remnants of the tropical storm approach. Within hours, rainfall intensifies due to the mountainous terrain, and Flood Warnings are issued for multiple counties. Your facility must initiate internal and external notifications to prepare for potential impacts.

Key Issues

- Timely Dissemination of Weather Alerts
- Communication with External Partners
- Reliability of Notification Systems

Questions

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 1. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. Are alerts from the NWS and emergency management being received? If so, are they quickly shared with staff and leadership and how?
2. Who are you notifying at this stage, internally and externally? (e.g., local EMS, public health, and regional healthcare coalitions)
3. What platforms/alerting methods does your organization utilize?
4. Are backup systems in place if primary communication channels fail? If so, what backup systems?

MODULE 2: ACTIVATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Scenario

With the storm now 12 hours from landfall, rainfall exceeds projections, and flash flooding begins in nearby areas. Roads become impassable, and landslides are reported. Your facility must assess the situation and determine whether to activate its emergency operations plan.

Key Issues

- Situational Awareness and Risk Assessment
- Decision Authority and Activation Thresholds
- Communication of Activation Status

Questions

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 2. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. How is your facility monitoring real-time conditions and assessing local threats?
2. Who decides when to activate your Emergency Operations Plan?
3. Are the criteria for activating it clearly defined?
4. Is the activation decision communicated clearly to staff?
5. What external partners do you communicate with when you activate your Emergency Operations Plan?
6. What internal actions and discussions are taking place around property and infrastructure impacts, clinical and operational readiness, and overall facility preparation?

MODULE 3: COORDINATION AND PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS

Scenario

Flooding is now impacting multiple healthcare facilities in the region. Emergency management initiates coordination efforts for sheltering, medical surge, and transportation support. Your facility must implement preparedness actions and coordinate with partners.

Key Issues

- Regional Coordination and Information Sharing
- Implementation of Preparedness Measures
- Vendor Agreements and Resource Requests

Questions

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 3. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. Is your facility actively participating in any coordination calls? If so, with whom?
2. Does your facility have a designated staff member to handle communication with leadership and corporate?
3. What steps does your organization take with staff/patients/volunteers in preparing for severe weather? (e.g., check-in process, lodging, etc.)
4. If there is a check-in process established, is there a set cadence following the initial check-in?
5. Does your facility limit any visitor/entry points before anticipated severe weather events?
6. What does communication look like to patients/residents/family members/etc.?
7. What vendor agreements/contracts are in place? Is the process for requesting or offering support clear?
8. Have you discussed sheltering in place versus evacuating?
9. How are staff ensuring their own personal readiness? (e.g., family communication plan, personal supplies, alternate routes for work)

APPENDIX A: EXERCISE SCHEDULE

12:30 PM – 1:00 PM	Registration
1:00 PM – 1:20 PM	Welcome
1:20 PM – 1:50 PM	Module 1: Emergency Notification Protocols
1:50 PM – 2:10 PM	Report Out
2:10 PM – 2:45 PM	Module 2: Activation and Decision-Making
2:45 PM – 3:05 PM	Report Out
3:05 PM – 3:40 PM	Module 3: Coordination and Preparedness Actions
3:40 PM – 4:00 PM	Report Out
4:00 PM – 4:40 PM	Hotwash
4:40 PM – 5:00 PM	Closing Comments

APPENDIX B: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

Southwest Virginia Healthcare Coalition	Maple Grove Rehabilitation & Care Center	Fresenius – Southwest (Grundy)
Fresenius – Mountain Empire (Norton)	Radford Health & Rehab Center	Abingdon Health & Rehab Center
Caris Healthcare – Wytheville	Mountain Laurel Rehab and Nursing	Commonwealth Care of Roanoke
Rehab Center and Memory Care at Bristol	Caris Healthcare – Abingdon	Virginia Department of Health
Pheasant Ridge Nursing & Rehab	Fresenius – Smyth County	NHC Healthcare, Bristol
Caris Healthcare	Lee Health & Rehab Center	Stanleytown Health and Rehabilitation Center
Valley Health & Rehab	Caris Healthcare – Cedar Bluff	Galax Health & Rehab Center
Pulaski Health & Rehab Center	Caris Healthcare – Big Stone Gap	Clinch Valley Medical Center
Fresenius – Twin County	Fresenius – Abingdon	Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center
Kroontje Center at warm Hearth Village	Horizon Behavioral Health	Fresenius – Montgomery
Danville-Pittsylvania Community Services	Friendship Health and Rehab Center – North	Gentle Shepherd Hospice
Horizon Behavioral Health – Timothy/Bethany	Richfield Health Center Salem	Amedisys Home Health – Roanoke
Friendship Health and Rehab Center – South	Fresenius – Roanoke Salem	LewisGale Medical Center
Raileigh Court Health and Rehabilitation Center	Fresenius – Rocky Mount	Fresenius – South Roanoke
Fresenius – Crystal Springs	Snyder Nursing Home, Inc.	Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association
Oakwood Health and Rehab	Amedisys Home Health	Brandon Oaks Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
Springtree Health & Rehabilitation	Surgery Center of Lynchburg	Berkshire Health and Rehabilitation Center
Star City Rehabilitation and Nursing	Roanoke Valley Center for Sight – Salem	Brian Center of Alleghany
Mulberry Creek Nursing and Rehab Center	Francis Marion Manor Health & Rehabilitation	Fresenius – New River
Fresenius – North Roanoke	Brian Center Health Rehab – Fincastle	Kings Grant Retirement Community

Blue Ridge Surgery Center	Westminster-Canterbury of Lynchburg	Roanoke Valley Center for Sight – Roanoke
Fresenius – Blue Ridge	Bland Nursing & Rehab	Fresenius – Friendship Manor
Blue Ridge Therapy Connection		

APPENDIX C: RELEVANT PLANS

- [Virginia Department of Health Local Health Districts Map](#)
- National Weather Service Blacksburg: [NWS Blacksburg, VA](#)
- National Weather Service Charleston: [NWS Charleston, WV](#)
- National Weather Service Morristown: [NWS Morristown, TN](#)

APPENDIX D: ACRONYMS

Acronym	Term
AAR	After Action Report
ASPR	Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response
CMS	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
EEG	Exercise Evaluation Guides
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
IP	Improvement Plan
NWS	National Weather Service
SitMan	Situation Manual
SVHC	Southwest Virginia Healthcare Coalition
TTX	Tabletop Exercise
VHASS	Virginia Healthcare Alerting & Status System