



2026 Resilient Communications Drill: Participant Guide

Exercise Window September 1-30, 2026

This document provides step-by-step instructions for participation in the Resilient Communications Drill, scheduled for September 1-30, 2026.

Core Capability	Exercise Objective	Critical Task
Operational Communication	Test alternate communications systems and plans with key incident response partners (i.e. industry, government)	Evaluate organizational Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency (PACE) Model and resilient communication plans to demonstrate capability to re-establish communications networks during and following an incident impacting data network to enable incident response and situational awareness.

STEP 1: PREPARATION

1. Choose a date and time during the exercise window to participate. Register organization's intent to participate [HERE](#).
2. Review PACE communications model, resilient communications plans, identify communication methods and systems to test and evaluate during the drill. Consider adding complexity by implementing simulated cyber-constrained scenario options whereas communication methods requiring internet provider access is limited or non-existent. To further increase complexity, a participating organization could consider limited to no-notice implementation of the drill to the organizational participants.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXAMPLE 1

Standard Drill: Non-cyber constrained environment

Primary: Email, landline/VoIP, cellular voice/text

Alternate: GETS or WPS

Contingency: Satellite phone, satellite internet system, high- or ultra-high frequency radios, land mobile radio system

Emergency: Discuss internal time-based actions based on limited/no communications

ORGANIZATIONAL EXAMPLE 2

Contingency Emergency: Cyber constrained environment

Primary: Email, landline/VoIP, cellular voice/text (simulated not available)

Alternate: GETS or WPS (simulated not available)

Contingency: Satellite phone, satellite internet system, high- or ultra-high frequency radios, land mobile radio system

Emergency: Discuss internal time-based actions based on limited/no communications

Examples of organizational PACE models. Example 2 increases complexity by implementing a scenario whereas internet provider access is limited or non-existent. To further increase complexity, provide limited to no-notice to internal communications users.



3. After determining scope and complexity, identify the alternate communication systems that to test, and the receiving organizations that to contact during the drill. Receiving organizations may be located anywhere in the United States, including the contiguous and outside contiguous states and territories.
4. Coordinate with and brief organizational participants (unless choosing the 'no-notice' add-on) and identified receiving organizations on the exercise objectives, conduct date/time, and instructions for engagement.
5. Ensure chosen alternate communication systems and updated supporting documents (emergency contact rosters, troubleshooting guides, etc.) are available for participants on conduct day (unless implementing the 'no-notice' add-on, in which case accessing these documents should be part of the evaluation.
6. Choosing organizations to contact during the drill and developing an information-sharing contact list. Ideally, participants will have a list of organizations with whom they would typically need to maintain communications during an emergency, including contact information for their primary, alternate, and other contingency or emergency communications systems. Using this emergency contact list when choosing organizations to contact during the drill will allow an organization to not only exercise its communications systems, but its supporting processes and documents as well.

The Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER) in conjunction with the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO) has created an Energy Emergency Response Playbook for States and Territories. Appendix B (Information-Sharing Contact List) includes a template for identifying critical organizations and creating an emergency contact roster. Download the document at https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/DOE_CESER_Energy_Emergency_Response_Playbook_for_State_and_Territories_FINAL_508_0.pdf

STEP 2: CONDUCT (SEPTEMBER 1-30, 2026)

1. On conduct day, begin using alternate communications systems at the pre-determined, self-scheduled time.
2. It is suggested to use **at least two (2) alternate two-way communications systems** to share information with at least two other offices with likely engagement during a real-world incident. Examples of communication systems, dependent on the chosen exercise option, could include:
 - Satellite phones (voice, text, and/or virtual platform dial-in)
 - Cellular phone texting
 - Amateur radio or emergency radio systems
 - Email and Internet-based systems (unless including a cyber-constrained scenario)
 - Government Emergency Telecommunications System (GETS) / Wireless Priority Service (WPS)



3. Ensure all communications start with '**EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE**' or **THIS IS AN EXERCISE**, to ensure the following message and the activity itself is for exercise purposes and to distinguish from real-world operations and messaging.
4. Using internal debriefing processes, identify strengths and areas for improvement from the drill to help in developing resilient communications plans. Ensure corrective action items are assigned and consider evaluating following implementation.

STEP 3: DRILL FEEDBACK

1. Complete a short voluntary feedback form by October 9, 2026, acknowledging participation in the drill, [Feedback Form](#).

Information collected will remain confidential and results will only be used to identify overall participation trends. Organization-specific information such as participant names will **NOT** be included in any exercise summaries.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Email Exercises@hq.doe.gov for more information.



Resilient Comms Drill Addendum to Participant Guidance and Instructions

PACE PLANNING FOR RESILIENT COMMUNICATIONS

One key element of any organization's continuity of operations plan is ensuring the ability to communicate in all circumstances, regardless of technological or environmental impacts. One methodology used to develop a continuity communications plan is the PACE model which identifies successive communications systems that will be employed if normal primary and backup communications methods become unavailable.

Each letter of the PACE acronym identifies a category of one or more communications systems that represent the spectrum of options that the organization can employ as crisis conditions and their associated capabilities evolve and progress. The PACE categories are:

(P) Primary	This is the normal, daily, and most reliable communication method or methods used by the organization. Examples may include phone communication (landline or Voice-over-Internet Protocol), virtual collaboration platforms, or internet messaging applications.
(A) Alternate	This represents other common but less optimal methods of communication. Alternate methods may be used on a daily basis in conjunction with primary means. Depending on the organization, some of the Primary communication methods described above may serve as Alternate communication methods, as can other methods that organization members may frequently use (such as cell phones or cellular texting).
(C) Contingency	This represents methods that are not used, or rarely used, on a daily basis. They may require specialized equipment (incurring additional costs) and training to employ and may not be as fast or easy as primary and alternate methods. They should use completely separate communications methods from primary and alternate methods, and therefore function when those systems are unavailable. Satellite phones, high-frequency radios, and emergency cell phone networks and devices are examples of Contingency methods.
(E) Emergency	This represents the least preferred communications methods, which may have significant capability gaps or require specialized training compared to organization Primary, Alternate, and Contingency Methods. They are typically not monitored or used on a daily basis, and therefore not designed to meet daily organization information sharing requirements. Examples may include some methods identified under the Contingency category, as well as analog landline phones or line-of-sight short range radios.

The above systems are examples of what organizations may identify under each PACE category. How an organization categorizes each of its systems depends on its capability and its



communication and information sharing needs (for example, some organizations may consider satellite phones or radios to be an Alternate communications system, but cellular texting to be an Emergency system).

Including one or more communications systems under a PACE category indicates that the organization has the capability to use that system or method. This means not only having the actual communications system but also required supporting equipment (such as emergency power), reference documentation, and trained personnel that can employ the identified systems. Organizations should not identify a system as part of their PACE plan if they do not have the ability to employ it during a crisis. It is preferable for an organization to only have plans for two or three PACE categories that it is equipped and trained to employ than to write a plan that shows systems in all four categories that the organization is not yet fully capable of using during a crisis.

For more information about the PACE methodology and applying it to develop an organization's resilient communications plan, please see the following references:

- National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators PACE Plan Resources, [National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators | CISA](#)
- “Leveraging the PACE Plan into the Emergency Communications Ecosystem,” National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC). [Leveraging the PACE Plan into the Emergency Communications Ecosystem, Apr. 2023 \(cisa.gov\)](#)
- ‘Energy Emergency Response Playbook for State and Territories,’ May 2022. [Energy Emergency Response Playbook for States and Territories \(energy.gov\)](#)
- “PACE Plan Resources,” Puget Sound Healthcare Emergency Communications Systems (PUSHECS) Council. https://pushecs.org/resources/pace_resources/
- ‘PACE Planning for Critical Comms,’ Skymira RoIP Solutions. [PACE Planning for Critical Comms White Paper](#)



Optional Sample Player Worksheet

For internal exercise use only, not to be submitted to U.S. Department of Energy

Your Organization: <i>Acme Natural Gas</i>	Your Name: <i>Joe Smith</i>
Your Email/Phone: Joe.smith@emailsystem.com <i>555-555-5555</i>	
Contact #1	Contact #2
Organization and Player Contacted: <i>Jim's Natural Gas, Sue Stevens</i>	Organization and Player Contacted: <i>National Gas Organization, Juan Reynolds</i>
Method of contact: <i>Satellite phone</i>	Method of contact: <i>Skype</i>
Did you attempt to contact any other organizations but were unsuccessful? ☒ Yes No	
Why were you unable to contact them? <i>I attempted to contact the State EOC through email but found I did not have the correct contact information for the ESF 12 desk. Thanks to this great exercise, I have updated my contact list with the correct name and email address for this position.</i>	



Player Worksheet (for completion during the drill)

(for internal exercise use only, not to be submitted to U.S. Department of Energy)

Your Organization:	Your Name:
Your Email/Phone:	
Contact #1	Contact #2
Organization and Player Contacted:	Organization and Player Contacted:
Method of contact:	Method of contact:
Did you attempt to contact any other organizations but were unsuccessful? Yes No	
Why were you unable to contact them?	