

TABLE TOP EXERCISE: MAXIMIZING U.S. COVID-19 VACCINE DISTRIBUTION THROUGH USE OF THE WHOLE U.S. VACCINE SUPPLY CHAIN SYSTEM

What: The Biden administration should conduct a series of Table Top exercises to determine whether it can maximize U.S. vaccine distribution and speed up delivery of vaccines by using the entire U.S. pharmaceutical and medical supply distribution system.

When: The Table Tops should begin now to prepare for the surge of vaccine distribution coming soon, expected from spring through the fall of 2021.

Who: FEMA is well positioned to facilitate the initial Table Top exercise working with U.S. pharmaceutical and medical supply distributors, who have the established relationships and capabilities from manufacturers to the administration sites that can further enable getting “shots in arms.” Distributors can illustrate the full capability of the entire system to quickly, efficiently, safely and equitably deliver vaccines to tens of thousands of provider sites across the country.

Overview: The Table Top exercise will focus on identifying: (1) the multiple supply chain routes via public health and commercial infrastructure which can get vaccines quickly and safely to the greatest possible number of health care entities that can administer them; (2) the best supply chain routes to retail pharmacies, hospitals, physician offices, and other health care facilities; (3) the best supply chain routes to mass and mobile vaccine sites; (4) the best mechanisms for maximizing distribution in diverse/minority and rural communities; (5) the touchpoints where further government investment can achieve broader and accelerated vaccine distribution; and (6) the redundant mechanisms which can prevent system shutdown.

Agenda: The Table Top exercise will allow FEMA to work with major U.S. commercial pharmaceutical and medical supply distributors who will bring their prescription drug and vaccine supply and logistics distribution expertise and capabilities to the table to: (1) map out the entire U.S. commercial pharmaceutical distribution system; (2) identify the strengths and weaknesses of each distributor and supply route option; (3) identify the best networks to get product to desired sites; (4) identify how to build redundancy, back up plans and cooperative agreements between distribution supply chain participants to solve logistical problems quickly to keep vaccines flowing; (5) identify how to start to prepare and link all participating distributors and vaccine sites to appropriate federal technology to ensure good flow of data; and (6) identify how to connect and integrate the public and private sector to ensure that the Phase 2 rollout and administration of vaccines across America can transition to support the long-term distribution/administration that will be required for years to come.

Questions/Challenges To Address: FEMA can use the Table Tops to address and answer challenges and questions such as: (1) how distributors can identify/reach a broader network of providers as supply and access expands; (2) which distributors can reach different vaccination administration sites the most quickly and effectively; (3) which distributors have the networks and storage capability needed for each vaccine; (4) how new distributors get plugged into the necessary technology systems now; (5) what supply and logistics problems can be identified and addressed now; and (6) how the commercial distribution network can support the goal of equitable access to vaccines in diverse/minority and rural communities.

Details of the Exercise: The exercise will:

1. Map current engagement structure of all involved entities in the COVID-19 national vaccine program and their operational procedures and identify gaps in this program design that result in delayed administration of available vaccine doses.
2. Examine the capabilities, breadth, and expertise of pharmaceutical and medical supply distributors across the entire healthcare continuum to illustrate the capacity of the existing supply chain to ensure the most optimal, safe and accelerated distribution of vaccines.
3. Identify steps to more fully leverage the entirety of the U.S. pharmaceutical and medical supply chain to more efficiently and equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccines to all U.S. communities.