

PALMETTO INFERNO FULL- SCALE EXERCISE



2026



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Exercise Overview

Table 1: Exercise Overview

Exercise Name	Palmetto Inferno Full-Scale Exercise
Exercise Dates	March 24-25, 2026
Scope	The two-day full-scale exercise (FSE) took place at the South Carolina State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Other jurisdictions conducted exercises in conjunction with the state in which players responded to coordinated exercise scenarios at their play location.
Focus Area(s)	Preparation and Response
Core Capabilities	Planning; Operational Coordination; Operational Communications; Situational Assessment; Public Information & Warning; Logistics and Supply Chain Management; Mass Care Services; Mass Search & Rescue Operations; Environmental Health & Safety; Infrastructure Systems; Public Health, Healthcare, & Emergency Services; Fire Management & Suppression
Objectives	1. Activate the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) at Operating Condition (OPCON) 1 including all ESFs. 2. Evaluate South Carolina Emergency Operations Plan (SC EOP) and draft Wildfire Plan in response to multiple large wildfires. 3. Conduct planning and advanced party operations necessary for shifting to the Alternate EOC with minimal disruption to ongoing response operations. 4. Identify resource shortfalls and cascading effects to the whole community. 5. Validate South Carolina Recovery Plan in recovery operations to multiple large wildfires across the State
Threat or Hazard	Natural / Wildfire
Scenario	Throughout January and February 2026, drought conditions in South Carolina created a high risk of wildfires. On March 19, 2026, a wildfire was reported in the vicinity of Highland, SC (Greenville County). Due to ongoing drought conditions coupled with high winds, this fire rapidly spread throughout the area, overwhelming local assets. In addition, over the next several days, multiple other fires broke out across the State. These fires also rapidly grew and overwhelmed local capabilities, initiating an activation of the SEOC and a request for a State of Emergency from the Governor. A fire on March 25, 2026 develops in Lexington County, threatening the SEOC and prompting a potential shift to the AEOC.
Sponsors	South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD)
Participating Organizations	See Appendix C: Participating Agencies

Exercise Name	Palmetto Inferno Full-Scale Exercise
Point of Contact (POC)	Parker Riggs Training and Exercise Manager SCEMD priggs@emd.sc.gov 803-737-8666

Executive Summary

On March 24-25 2026, SCEMD conducted the Palmetto Inferno Full-Scale Exercise (FSE) simulating a statewide response to a large-scale wildfire event impacting multiple South Carolina counties. The exercise was designed to test SEOC activation procedures, validate interagency coordination capabilities, evaluate the state's readiness to transition to the Alternate Emergency Operations Center (AEOC), and assess the ability to sustain operations while addressing cascading community impacts.

Strengths

SEOC leadership demonstrated disciplined, intelligence-driven decision-making in escalating to OPGON 1 based on defined activation triggers. The Disaster Intelligence Group (DIG) produced high-quality disaster intelligence products by integrating GIS platforms and external data sources. A consistent operational briefing rhythm supported shared situational awareness across all sections. ESF-15 effectively coordinated public information messaging in alignment with Joint Information System (JIS) principles. AEOC planning efforts began early in the operational period, demonstrating a forward-leaning posture toward continuity of operations. Participant survey respondents noted that communications between county and state resources were generally functional, and that Palmetto worked well for those familiar with it.

Areas for Improvement

Several areas require continued attention. The PalmettoEOC platform experienced performance degradation under full activation load. Lifeline status reporting generally lacks hazard-specific thresholds and a formal adjudication process. The AEOC transition plan revealed a critical dependence on physically relocating equipment, and most staff lacked familiarity with the virtual EOC capability. Survey respondents additionally identified gaps in ESF-6/ESF-11 feeding roles, ESF-10 satellite communications capability, ESF-14's FMAG process, Florence County's SAR and HAZMAT capacity, and the Situation Unit SOP.

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

Objective 1

Activate the SEOC at OPCON 1 including all Emergency Support Staff.

Related core capabilities: Planning; Operational Coordination; and Operational Communications.

This section describes the strengths and areas for improvement for each capability aligned to this objective.

STRENGTHS

The following area was identified as a strength:

Strength 1

SEOC leadership demonstrated disciplined, criteria-based decision-making in escalating to OPCON 1.

Analysis: The SEOC escalated to OPCON 1 in direct response to multiple wildfire reports, rapid fire growth, and proximity to populated areas — all of which met the activation triggers identified in the South Carolina Wildfire Plan (Appendix 20). SEOC leadership reviewed incident intelligence, including fire perimeters, rates of spread, weather indicators, and potential population impacts, before implementing the OPCON shift. This evidence-based approach eliminated subjective reasoning and ensured the response posture was appropriately matched to the threat level.

Strength 2

The Disaster Intelligence Group (DIG) produced high-quality disaster intelligence products by analyzing diverse data streams.

Analysis: The DIG employed a suite of situational awareness tools—including GIS platforms—to maintain an accurate and continuously updated hazard picture. Subject-matter experts from the National Weather Service (NWS) and the State Forestry Commission provided continuous onsite technical validation. The IAP followed ICS Form 202 standards with clearly stated objectives and priorities.

Strength 3

The SEOC maintained a consistent operational briefing rhythm that supported shared situational awareness.

Analysis: The SERT conducted structured shift-change, mid-shift, and turnover briefings each operational period. ESFs provided operational updates, lifeline status, and anticipated needs during briefings. The SEOC structure included Operations, Logistics, DIG/Plans, and Recovery sections with staffing that matched incident complexity. The consistent briefing cadence supported operational continuity across all SERT elements.

Strength 4

The SERT effectively synthesized data from field operations, county calls, and internal intelligence to produce an accurate situational picture shared across the SEOC.

Analysis: The SERT hosted a WebEx County coordination call, enabling local jurisdictions to provide real-time updates on community impacts and resource shortfalls. The PalmettoEOC Significant Events application was used effectively to track and disseminate high-impact incidents, creating a centralized information repository accessible to all ESFs. This allowed leadership to maintain alignment between incident conditions and operational priorities.

Strength 5

Primary communications systems remained continuously available, with backup systems pre-staged and ready.

Analysis: Primary communications systems—including email, Microsoft Teams, phones, and radios—remained continuously available with no reported interruptions. ESF-2 maintained readiness to deploy backup systems and had pre-identified alternate pathways. Activation notifications were distributed promptly across multiple channels. Survey respondents from Florence County noted that communications between county and city resources were seamless and that Palmetto worked well for first responders to understand EOC support.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The following areas were identified as areas for improvement:

Area for Improvement 1

ESFs did not receive clear guidance on the inputs required for Situation Reports (SitRep), IAP and Summary Risk Assessment (SRA).

Analysis: Several ESFs demonstrated uncertainty regarding what data elements were expected. The DIG noted that IAP, SRA, and Situation Report emails did not clearly specify what was being asked of ESFs. This created planning cycle inefficiencies and risked degrading the completeness of the overall risk assessment. Survey feedback from the DIG specifically highlighted the need for clearer written instructions and a one-pager to be distributed to SERT and posted in PalmettoEOC.

Recommendations:

- Develop standardized ESF input templates with clearly defined data elements.
- Publish a one-pager outlining IAP/SRA/SitRep input requirements and distribute to all SERT prior to activations and post to Palmetto.
- Conduct annual ESF training on IAP/SRA/SitRep input expectations for all ESF and Lifeline leads.

Area for Improvement 2

The PalmettoEOC common operating picture experienced degraded performance under full OPCON 1 user load.

Analysis: The PalmettoEOC platform experienced degraded performance as the event progressed, resulting in minor delays and reduced operational efficiency. The platform was strained while handling the full user load of an OPCON 1 activation, resulting in system latency that hindered operations. ESF-2's post-exercise survey response also noted difficulty with PalmettoEOC not updating properly during the exercise. Variability in Resource Request board refresh rates and inconsistent visibility among users created occasional delays in workload distribution.

Recommendations:

- Coordinate with PalmettoEOC developers to assess and improve platform capacity for high-user-load scenarios.

Area for Improvement 3

Lifeline status reporting lacked formally defined parameters and hazard-specific indicators, with no clear adjudication process.

Analysis: There was no defined process to resolve disagreements between responsible ESFs and the DIG regarding lifeline status updates, and it was unclear what entity has final authority. A specific example was noted regarding smoke impacts on the Health & Medical lifeline, where no clear escalation threshold from green to yellow was defined.

Recommendations:

- Develop hazard-specific lifeline status guides with clear thresholds and escalation criteria for ESF leads.
- Establish a formal adjudication process for lifeline status disputes with designated final authority.

- Incorporate lifeline status training into annual ESF training.

Area for Improvement 4

The Situation Unit SOP needs improvement

Analysis: The Operations Section survey response identified that the Situation Unit SOP needs improvement.

Recommendations:

- Review and revise the Situation Unit SOP to clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Train the Situation Unit and Operations Desk on the updated SOP.

Area for Improvement 5

ESF-2 identified a shortage of experienced personnel able to operate in the SEOC and a need to improve Sit Rep reporting processes.

Analysis: ESF-2 noted that a shortage of experienced personnel capable of operating effectively in the SEOC is an ongoing challenge, and that upcoming organizational changes may further impact staffing.

Recommendations:

- Improve ESF-2 staffing posture for future SEOC activations, accounting for anticipated personnel changes.

Objective 2

Coordinate and Support Statewide Response to Wildfire Incidents.

Related core capabilities: Operational Coordination; Operational Communications; Public Information and Warning

STRENGTHS

The following area was identified as a strength:

Strength 1

ESFs demonstrated a mature operational posture through active monitoring, proactive communication, and seamless integration within the SEOC structure.

Analysis: ESFs remained engaged and demonstrated a consistent understanding of wildfire progression, operational impacts, and required resource postures. Coordination among ESFs was evident in briefing participation, information exchange, and the alignment of operational priorities. Their proactive communication enabled rapid identification of potential cascading impacts, improving the SEOC's ability to anticipate and allocate resources effectively.

Strength 2

ESF-15 demonstrated effective and synchronized public information processes aligned with JIS principles.

Analysis: ESF-15 issued timely public safety messages—including road closures, smoke advisories, and safety bulletins—across multiple state-managed platforms. Messaging was synchronized with operational updates from ESF-4/9, Operations, and the DIG. PIOs maintained ongoing communication with SEOC leadership to validate message accuracy before release.

Area for Improvement 1

An NWS exercise product was only marked 'EXERCISE' on the first page, creating risk of public confusion.

Analysis: An NWS product used during the exercise was marked 'EXERCISE' on the first page only. The failure to mark all pages creates a risk of public confusion and undermines message integrity.

Recommendations:

- Establish a standard protocol requiring 'EXERCISE' markings on every page of all exercise products.
- Coordinate with NWS and partner agencies on exercise marking requirements prior to future exercises.

Area for Improvement 2

ESF-14 lacked a formalized FMAG information gathering process and would have been unable to complete a second FMAG form in the same day.

Analysis: Survey feedback from ESF-14 identified that quickly gathering and compiling details about multiple simultaneous wildfires posed significant challenges. Identifying which fires to focus on for FMAG purposes was difficult, and the lack of a formalized process meant ESF-14 would not likely have been able to complete the FMAG information form for a second fire in the same day. Evacuation order information also needed to be received more promptly.

Recommendations:

- Refine the ESF-14 FMAG information checklist and add a resource/source column for each required data element.
- Revise ESF-14 FMAG SOP to include consideration of federal emergency declaration request early in multi-wildfire activation
- Identify priority indicators (e.g., evacuation orders) to determine FMAG request viability early.
- Coordinate with counties and Regional Emergency Managers to ensure prompt reporting of evacuation orders in Palmetto.

Area for Improvement 3

Florence County identified a lack of formalized search and rescue capabilities, HAZMAT response capacity limitations, and county level EMS resource gaps at scale.

Analysis: Survey feedback from Florence County highlighted that local EMS would be quickly overwhelmed in a large-scale wildfire event. An initial HAZMAT release caused a standby posture delay of 15-25 minutes while awaiting professional guidance. The City of Florence no longer has wildfire combat capability and relies entirely on County resources. Search and rescue is deprioritized when resources are limited.

Recommendations:

- Expand Emergency Response Team training to include more firefighters for HAZMAT response capability throughout the county.
- Develop a coordinated plan to leverage county and city drone assets for search and rescue as a stop-gap until state resources arrive.
- Continue to coordinate with state on EMS surge capacity and mutual aid protocols for large-scale wildfire events.

Area for Improvement 4

ESF-10 experienced simulated loss of all cellular, internet, and radio communications with only limited satellite voice capability as backup.

Analysis: During the exercise, a simulated loss of all cellular, internet service, and Palmetto 800 radio was applied. ESF-10 survey feedback identified that only limited satellite voice capability was available, and that satellite-based internet access is needed. It was unclear whether the SEOC can support or distribute satellite internet access to ESFs.

Recommendations:

- Research and identify satellite-based internet access solutions for ESF-10 field and SEOC use.
- Coordinate with SCEMD to determine availability of satellite phones and satellite internet for distribution to ESFs.
- Incorporate communications degradation scenarios into future exercises to test backup protocols end-to-end.

Area for Improvement 5

ESF-6 and ESF-11 roles and responsibilities for feeding and mass feeding missions are not clearly defined in current annexes.

Analysis: ESF-6's post-exercise survey identified a gap in the understanding of roles between ESF-6 and ESF-11 as it pertains to feeding and mass feeding operations. Communication between the two ESFs during the exercise was noted as good and feeding injects were handled collaboratively. However, formal annexes have not been updated to solidify each ESF's responsibilities, and further work is needed to create a clear path forward.

Recommendations:

- Jointly revise ESF-6 and ESF-11 annexes as a collaborative group to clearly establish roles and responsibilities for feeding missions.
- Conduct continued joint training between ESF-6 and ESF-11 on feeding operations.

Objective 3

Plan for the Activation and Transition to the Alternate Emergency Operations Center (AEOC).

Related core capabilities: Planning; Operational Coordination; Operational Communications

STRENGTHS

The following area was identified as a strength:

Strength 1

AEOC transition planning was initiated early in the operational period, reflecting a proactive continuity of operations posture.

Analysis: AEOC transition pre-planning was initiated in response to escalating fire activity and sustained SEOC operations. Leadership reviewed AEOC readiness elements including packing lists, equipment needs, and facility layouts. An AEOC transition working group provided a briefing to SERT leadership outlining the transition plan. ESFs supplied required planning inputs, enabling the

development of AEOC staffing models and workspace assignments. The working group identified anticipated constraints at the AEOC — including reduced workstation capacity and limited space — and recommended a modified staffing schedule to manage these limitations. The plan also acknowledged that some ESFs would need to conduct coordination from their home agency facilities, reflecting an awareness of the need for distributed coordination models.

Strength 2

The AEOC transition planning process successfully preserved the core SEOC organizational structure and produced a detailed, realistic plan.

Analysis: The planning process was highly effective. ESFs were engaged and provided actionable inputs, allowing the working group to develop a detailed and realistic transition plan. The planning documentation successfully preserved the core SEOC organizational structure — Operations, Logistics, Plans/DIG, and Recovery — ensuring continuity of functional responsibilities. By identifying facility and workspace limitations in advance, the SERT was able to develop mitigation strategies proactively rather than reactively, demonstrating a maturing awareness of the operational challenges associated with AEOC transitions.

Strength 3

Core SEOC communications equipment is portable, providing a foundational capability for re-establishing primary systems at the AEOC.

Analysis: It was noted that essential communications equipment — including phones, routers, radios, and COP displays — is portable and can be transferred to the AEOC. Key personnel responsible for communications setup were identified. The portability of core systems provides a foundational level of capability, ensuring that if a successful transfer occurs, primary communications can be re-established at the alternate site.

Area for Improvement 1

The AEOC transition plan is critically dependent on the physical movement of IT and communications equipment, creating significant operational risk.

Analysis: Transition feasibility is constrained by the requirement to physically move critical systems — including servers, workstations, and communications hardware — from the SEOC to the AEOC. This makes a rapid, no-notice transition challenging, particularly if the primary EOC is directly impacted by a threat or hazard. The reliance on physically moving communications gear introduces additional risk and the potential for significant delays during a time-compressed transition. Communication protocols and notification steps for AEOC activation were discussed during planning but had not been tested.

Recommendations:

- Assess the feasibility of pre-positioning duplicate or redundant equipment at the AEOC to reduce dependence on physical transfer.
- Develop a detailed equipment transfer checklist and realistic activation timeline for inclusion in the COOP plan.
- Test communication protocols and AEOC notification steps through a dedicated functional exercise.

Area for Improvement 2

Most SERT staff lacked familiarity with the virtual EOC capability within PalmettoEOC.

Analysis: A functional virtual EOC capability does exist within the PalmettoEOC platform; however, most staff lacked familiarity with its features and activation procedures. Limited staff proficiency renders the Virtual EOC impractical for immediate use in a crisis. Lack of training and familiarity would introduce significant delays and friction when establishing operational workflows in a virtual environment.

Recommendations:

- Conduct virtual EOC orientation and proficiency training for all SERT personnel.
- Incorporate virtual EOC activation into future exercise scenarios to build staff proficiency and validate operational workflows.

Area for Improvement 3

No formal AEOC activation timeline or defined decision triggers were established, and logistical details such as travel routes and personnel phasing were ambiguous.

Analysis: No pre-determined AEOC activation timeline or specific decision triggers were identified during the exercise, leading to ambiguity about when to initiate a transition. Logistical details for the transition — including travel routes and personnel phasing — were also noted as ambiguous. The absence of a formal timeline and defined decision triggers complicates leadership's ability to make a timely, consistent decision during a fast-moving incident, and could lead to a delayed or hesitant transition when it is needed most.

Recommendations:

- Develop and publish formal AEOC activation decision criteria and a phased timeline within the Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan.

- Include specific decision triggers in the AEOC transition annex.
- Validate the AEOC activation plan through a dedicated functional exercise.

Objective 4

Sustain Response and Address Cascading Community Impacts.

Related core capabilities: Logistics and Supply Chain Management; Operational Communications; Infrastructure Systems; Public Information and Warning

STRENGTHS

The following area was identified as a strength:

Strength 1

The logistics system demonstrated core functionality in managing resource intake, assignment, and transport, with planning for surge capacity.

Analysis: Logistics functions utilized established resource request workflows and tracking boards to receive, assign, and follow requests. The Logistics Unit coordinated staging locations, transport modes, and delivery sequencing. Readiness to initiate EMAC requests and federal mission assignments was discussed as a contingency, with multiple sourcing pathways identified.

Strength 2

ESF-2 maintained excellent situational awareness of the communications posture and demonstrated strong asset prioritization.

Analysis: ESF-2 conducted internal status checks and confirmed availability of deployable assets including radio caches, mobile hotspots, and satellite phones. Communications resource requirements from counties and ESFs were captured and prioritized. Equipment placement plans were discussed to bolster coverage in terrain-affected areas.

Strength 3

Public information processes remained consistent and effective throughout Objective 4 activities, with a clear linkage between validated operational information and public messaging.

Analysis: ESF-15 disseminated road closures, safety bulletins, and assistance information via established channels, synchronized with operational updates. Coordination with county PIOs ensured locally relevant details were included in public messaging. The public information process

demonstrated a clear and consistent linkage between validated operational information and what was released to the public.

Area for Improvement 1

Inconsistent resource request tracking board refresh rates and resource catalog gaps created delays.

Analysis: Gaps in the standard resource catalog were also noted for certain fire-specific equipment such as water buffaloes and carriers, requiring ad hoc procurement steps to be identified. SCEMD Logistics survey feedback confirmed this challenge, noting that the learning curve for Supply Unit staff on reconciling resource requests and understanding ESF responsibilities is steep with ever-changing staff.

Recommendations:

- Identify specific roles responsible for maintaining resource request board currency during activations.
- Review and update the standard resource catalog to include fire-specific equipment such as water buffaloes and carriers.
- Continue leveraging in-house training days to improve Supply Unit staff proficiency on resource request reconciliation and ESF role assignments.

Area for Improvement 2

GIS data layers for certain licensed facilities contained gaps due to data synchronization limitations.

Analysis: Facility identification for healthcare sites leveraged GIS layers; however, gaps were noted for certain licensed facilities such as some nursing homes. These gaps could impact protective action decision-making for vulnerable populations.

Recommendations:

- Coordinate with ESF-6 and ESF-8 to identify and resolve GIS data synchronization gaps for all licensed facilities.
- Establish a recurring annual process for validating and updating facility data within GIS platforms.

Appendix A: Improvement Plan

This Improvement Plan (IP) is explicitly developed for South Carolina Palmetto Inferno FSE on March 24-25, 2026.

Table 2: Improvement Plan

Related Objective	Area for Improvement	Recommendation	Responsible Organization(s)	Target Completion Date
1	ESFs did not receive clear guidance on the inputs required for Situation Reports (SitRep), IAP and Situational Summary Risk Assessment (SRA). The DIG noted that IAP/SRA emails lacked clarity on what was being asked of ESFs.	Publish a one-pager outlining IAP/SRA/SitRep input requirements and distribute to all SERT prior to activations. Add the one pager to SEOC orientation	SCEMD Operations / SCEMD Plans-DIG / ESF Leads	Continuous
1	The PalmettoEOC platform experienced degraded performance under full OPCON 1 user load.	Coordinate with PalmettoEOC developers to assess platform capacity for high-user-load scenarios.	SCEMD Operations / PalmettoEOC Developers	Completed
1	Lifeline status reporting lacked formally defined parameters and hazard-specific indicators, with no clear adjudication process between ESFs and the DIG.	- Develop hazard-specific lifeline status guides with clear thresholds and escalation criteria. - Establish a formal adjudication process for lifeline status disputes with designated final authority. - Incorporate lifeline status training into annual ESF training.	SCEMD Plans-DIG/Lifeline Leads	Continuous
1	The Situation Unit SOP needs improvement.	- Review and revise the Situation Unit SOP to clarify roles and responsibilities. - Train the Situation Unit and Operations Desk on the updated SOP.	SCEMD Operations	September 2026 for plan

Related Objective	Area for Improvement	Recommendation	Responsible Organization(s)	Target Completion Date
				Continuous for training
1	Supply Unit processes and coordination mechanisms require updates to ensure alignment across ESF's, improve capability documentation, and synchronize annex revisions	- Update Supply Unit processes and documentation to align with current capabilities and ESF coordination requirements - Synchronize Supply Unit revisions with the ESF-6/ ESF-11 annex update cycle	ESF-6/ ESF-11	Continuous Early 2027
1	ESF roles and responsibilities for feeding missions between ESF-6 and ESF-11 were unclear.	- Update and jointly revise ESF-6 and ESF-11 annexes to clarify roles and responsibilities for feeding missions. - Conduct continued joint training between ESF-6 and ESF-11 on feeding operations	ESF-6 / ESF-11	Annexes: Early 2027 Continuous for training
2	An NWS exercise product was only marked 'EXERCISE' on the first page.	- Establish a protocol requiring 'EXERCISE' markings on every page of all exercise products. - Coordinate with NWS and partner agencies on marking requirements prior to future exercises.	SCEMD Exercise Coordinator / NWS Liaison	Continuous
2	ESF-14 lacked a formalized FMAG information gathering process and would have been unable to complete a second FMAG form in a single day.	- Refine the ESF-14 FMAG information checklist and add resource/source references for each data element. - Identify priority indicators (e.g., evacuation orders) to determine FMAG request viability early. - Coordinate with counties and Regional Emergency Managers	ESF-14 / SCEMD Operations	June 30 th , 2026 June 30 th , 2026

Related Objective	Area for Improvement	Recommendation	Responsible Organization(s)	Target Completion Date
		- to ensure prompt reporting of evacuation orders in Palmetto. - Revise the ESF-14 FMAG SOP to include early consideration and preparation of a federal emergency declaration request during multi-wildfire activations		September 2026
2	Florence County identified a lack of formalized search and rescue capabilities and HAZMAT response capacity, with EMS resources quickly overwhelmed at scale.	- Expand Emergency Response Team (ERT) training to include more firefighters for HAZMAT response. - Develop a plan to leverage county and city drone assets for search and rescue as a stop-gap until state resources arrive. - Coordinate with state on EMS surge capacity and mutual aid protocols for large-scale wildfire events.	Florence County EMD / SCEMD	2027
2	ESF-10 experienced simulated loss of all cellular, internet, and radio communications with only limited satellite voice capability.	- Research and procure satellite-based internet access capabilities for ESF-10. - Coordinate with SCEMD/ESF- 2 to determine availability of satellite phones and satellite internet for field teams. - Incorporate communications degradation scenarios into future exercises to test backup protocols.	ESF-10	End of 2026 Continuous
3	AEOC transition is critically dependent on the physical movement of IT and communications equipment.	- Assess feasibility of pre-positioning redundant equipment at the AEOC. - Develop a detailed equipment transfer checklist and timeline. - Test communication protocols and AEOC notification steps	SCEMD IT Section	December 31 st , 2026 July 30 th , 2026

Related Objective	Area for Improvement	Recommendation	Responsible Organization(s)	Target Completion Date
		through a dedicated functional exercise.		October 31 st , 2026
3	Most staff lacked familiarity with the virtual EOC within PalmettoEOC.	- Conduct virtual EOC orientation and proficiency training for all SERT personnel. - Incorporate virtual EOC activation into future exercise scenarios to build staff proficiency and validate operational workflows.	SCEMD Operations	March 2027 July 2027
3	No formal AEOC activation timeline or defined decision triggers were established.	- Develop formal AEOC activation decision criteria and phased timeline within the COOP plan. - Include specific decision triggers in the AEOC transition annex. - Validate via a dedicated functional exercise.	SCEMD Operations / SCEMD Plans/SCEMD Operations Support	December 2027
4	GIS data layers for certain licensed facilities (e.g., nursing homes) contained gaps.	- Coordinate with ESF-6 and ESF-8 to resolve GIS data synchronization gaps. - Establish a recurring annual process for validating facility data within GIS platforms.	ESF-6 / ESF-8 / SCEMD GIS Section	Continuous

Appendix B: Participant Feedback

Participants from across the SERT responded to the post-exercise survey, providing structured feedback on gaps, challenges, improvement priorities, and communication issues encountered during the Palmetto Inferno FSE. Key themes from the survey are summarized below.

Key Themes from Survey Responses

Across all respondents, four common themes emerged:

- Platform performance: Multiple respondents noted issues with Palmetto not updating reliably during the exercise.
- Clarity of roles and procedures: ESF-6/11 feeding responsibilities, the Situation Unit SOP, and IAP/SRA input expectations were identified as needing clearer definition.
- Communications resilience: ESF-10 and Florence County highlighted the need for improved satellite communications capability, particularly when primary systems are degraded.
- Training and staffing: Several respondents cited the need for more hands-on training, particularly for Supply Unit staff, DIG products, and wildfire-specific operations.

Respondent Summary

Table 3: Participant Feedback Summary

Key Challenges Identified	Identified Improvement Priority
Gap in ESF-6/ESF-11 feeding roles and responsibilities.	Update ESF-6/11 annexes collaboratively to establish clear roles for feeding missions.
Experienced personnel availability; PalmettoEOC not updating properly.	Improve staffing and reporting processes; resolve Palmetto update issues.
Lack of formalized SAR capabilities; HAZMAT response delays; EMS resource limitations.	Expand ERT training; leverage drones for SAR; improve EMS mutual aid planning.
Loss of cellular/internet/radio communications with limited satellite backup.	Research and acquire satellite internet access capability.
Steep learning curve for Supply Unit staff on resource request reconciliation and ESF roles.	Maximize in-house training days; continue resource request training.
Clarity of IAP/SRA/SitRep input requests; FMAG update needs; shift change brief structure.	Develop one-pager for IAP/SRA/SitRep expectations; update IAP SOP with email distribution list.

Key Challenges Identified	Identified Improvement Priority
Injects routed incorrectly to SEOC caused confusion; Situation Unit SOP needs improvement.	Revise Situation Unit SOP.
FMAG information gathering process needs refinement; difficulty tracking multiple simultaneous fires.	Refine FMAG checklist; coordinate with SCEMD Operations on evacuation order reporting.

Appendix C: Participating Agencies

Table 3: Participating Agencies

Participating Organizations
Local
Barnwell County
Beaufort County
Charleston County
Clarendon County
Colleton County
Dorchester County
Florence County
Georgetown County
Greenville County
Horry County
Kershaw County
Lancaster County
Lexington County
Mount Pleasant Waterworks
Richland County
State
South Carolina Department of Administration
South Carolina Department of Commerce
South Carolina Department of Environmental Services
South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (Fire and Life Safety)
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services
South Carolina Department of Public Health

Participating Organizations
South Carolina Department of Public Safety
South Carolina Department of Social Services
South Carolina Department of Transportation
South Carolina Emergency Management Division
South Carolina Material Management Office
South Carolina National Guard
South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff
State Law Enforcement Division
South Carolina Forestry Commission
Clemson University Livestock Public Health
Private/Nongovernmental Organizations
South Carolina Rural Water Association
SC Water/Wastewater Agency Network
American Red Cross
Salvation Army
Federal
National Weather Service
US Army Northern Command

Appendix D: Acronyms

Table 4: Acronyms

Acronym	Term
AAR	After-Action Report
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FSE	Full-Scale Exercise
IAP	Incident Action Plan
IP	Improvement Plan
IT	Information Technology
NED	National Exercise Division
OPCON	Operating Condition
POC	Point of Contact
SCEMD	South Carolina Emergency Management Division
SEOC	State Emergency Operations Center