



After Action Report and Hotwash Job Aid for Laboratory Staff

Introduction

This job aid aims to provide lab audiences with general knowledge and tools to conduct a Hotwash and After-Action Report after an incident, near miss, training exercise, or emergency response event. Laboratory professionals may utilize this job aid during routine trainings or new employee orientation.

What is a Hotwash?

A Hotwash is a facilitated discussion to debrief after an incident, near miss, training exercise or emergency response event. It captures participant feedback on event strengths, challenges, and possible improvements. Facilitators may clarify why certain actions occurred during an event. Recorders are encouraged to take notes during the Hotwash and provide a summary. Timing may vary, ideally, a Hotwash is conducted within a week to 2 months completion of an event, and the Hotwash lasts between thirty minutes to 2 hours.

1. **Recap:** What was supposed to happen?
2. **Review:** What actually happened?
3. **Analysis:** What did we do right?
4. **Improvements:** What could we do better?

What is an After-Action Report (AAR)?

An After-Action Report (AAR) serves as an in-depth official report of events that captures observations, recommends improvement for future events, and key lessons learned about an incident, near miss, exercise, or event. The findings from the Hotwash may be used to inform an AAR. The final AAR is distributed as a compiled document. The AAR completion time varies with the complexity of the incident, near miss, training exercise or emergency response event.

Table 1. Hotwash vs. AAR Comparison

Hotwash	AAR
<p>Format</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal open discussion. <p>Occurrence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occur within 60 days of the of the incident, near miss, exercise, or event. <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individuals directly involved attend.• Gather immediate observations and lessons learned. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss next steps and needed improvements.• Designed for brainstorming and collaboration.	<p>Format</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal, structured.• Documentation that follows an established template. <p>Occurrence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occur within 90 days of the incident, near miss, exercise, or event. <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designated individuals involved with reporting and writing process attend. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Captures record of the events and observations from the incident, near miss, exercise, or event.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed for organizational improvement and future learning. • Identify SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). • Analyze objectives and planning of the incident, near miss, exercise, or event.
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What are best practices for all participants?

Participants in both the Hotwash and AAR play an important role. Below are a few best practices to ensure a detailed Hotwash and AAR. When conducting an AAR and Hotwash consider the following:

- Accurately capture what happened during the incident, near miss, exercise, or event
- Share personal observations regarding how the incident, near miss, exercise or event transpired
- Capture key lessons learned
- Share recommendations on how to improve
- Identify corrective actions
- Identify training needs
- Incorporate lessons learned into new emergency preparedness and response plans

Table 2. Fillable Roles for Hotwash and AAR

Use this table to insert various roles to help navigate the Hotwash and AAR. The roles are unique to your laboratory and are not predefined.

Role	Definition of Role	Optional role vs. Required role in a Hotwash	Optional role vs. Required role in an AAR
E.g. Facilitators	An individual that keeps the hotwash focused.	Required	Optional

Helpful Resources

- [Introduction to Designing In- and After-Action Reviews](#)
- [After-Action Reports: Capturing Lessons Learned and Identifying Areas for Improvement](#)
- [FEMA After Action Report Development Video](#)
- [Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program \(HSEEP\) AAR Template](#)
- [Hot Wash Fillable Form](#)
- [Conducting an Outbreak Hotwash: Tools and Tips](#)
- [FEMA Glossary](#)
- [SWOT Analysis: Examples and Templates](#)