

# NATIONAL EMERGENCY PLAN FOR THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

This document describes the National Emergency Plan for the UK Telecoms sector. It is intended to provide an overview of the response by Government and Industry to any emergency situation which impacts on the Telecoms infrastructure of the UK.

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## Version Control

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## **1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE**

BIS has Lead Government Department (LGD) responsibility for responding to major incidents in the telecoms sector.

The aims of the emergency arrangements in place within BIS are consistent with the Cabinet Office “Concept of Operations” (CONOPs) to:

- Protect human life and, as far as possible, property. Alleviate suffering;
- Support the continuity of everyday activity and restoration of disrupted services at the earliest possible opportunity; and
- Uphold the rule of law and democratic process.

The plan is owned and administered by the Electronic Communications - Resilience and Response Group (EC-RRG), which includes all of the major telecommunications providers and relevant government representatives.

The initial responsibility for leading the response is with the company whose operations are affected by the disruption. However depending on the cause and / or extent of the telecoms disruption, a central Government response may be required, with BIS as lead Government Department.

A telecoms emergency can take many forms , but an emergency response may be required as a result of, for example, a major technical failure, an electronic attack (on telephony or data systems, including the internet) as well as human error, or infrastructure being affected by flooding or other incidents. The response to this will be determined by the severity and cause of the disruptions.

## **2. THE ROLE OF BIS**

As lead Government Department for telecoms policy BIS is responsible for leading the response to a civil emergency involving telecoms (including charring CCC if the incident is sufficiently severe), or form part of a response to an event where telecoms are disrupted, either directly or indirectly.

BIS will provide the link, and a two-way information flow, between the telecoms industry and central government during an emergency. For internal departmental response arrangements refer to the BIS EMERGENCY RESPONSE GUIDE

During normal office hours the telecoms resilience policy team will be the main point of contact and will deal with any emergency situations. Outside of these hours the standby duty officer will manage the situation. During a longer-lasting emergency, specific rotas will be arranged to manage response staffing.

## **3. THE ROLE OF INDUSTRY**

EC-RRG is the owner of this telecoms emergency plan. Industry is expected to manage their own internal response to any type of incident, and to inform government should there be an emergency of any severity.

Industry response to an emergency will be centred on the NEAT process (for details see 4.1). Individual operators will all have their own emergency and contingency plans but the interconnected nature of the telecoms industry makes it crucial that all operators are working together to contain and solve the problem. To ensure that this the case there are several key stages that industry will go through.

### **3.1 Information flow during an emergency**

- Initial identification of any network disruption by a Telecoms operator
- Activate NEAT to disseminate information on network status; agree industry actions for response and recovery; estimates for restoration
- Ensure that information regarding potential or actual emergencies with telecom implications are brought to the attention of the lead government department BIS
- Where relevant: Ensuring the safe operation of the telecommunication network during the emergency. This may require operators to isolate the systems that have a fault to ensure that it cannot be cascaded throughout the entire network
- Manage the technical aspects of the emergency to ensure restoration of the network as soon as possible.

## **4. RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS**

### **4.1 NEAT**

The Telecoms industry response to an emergency is known as the National Emergency Alert for Telecoms (NEAT). This takes the form of a conference call that can be convened by any Telecoms provider or government department if they believe that there is a problem or potential problem with the communications infrastructure. The NEAT conference bridge is operated by either BT or Cable and Wireless, members of the EC-RRG are alerted to call for a NEAT via text, phone call and e-mail. The NEAT call will convene within one hour of the alert.

The NEAT forum is used as a forum to co-ordinate and industry response to a crisis as well as for liaison between industry and government. NEAT calls are reconvened regularly until the normal service is restored.

All of the main Telecoms providers are represented on the NEAT communications bridge, including all major fixed, mobile and internet providers.

The initial NEAT call is used to ascertain the extent of the problem and to share information amongst industry representatives and those from

government. BIS is represented on the call as well as other governmental and regulatory bodies including CPNI and Ofcom (see diagram).

## **4.2 Memorandum of Understanding**

The Electronic Communication – Resilience and Response Group (EC-RRG) operates to two key documents:

- The National Emergency Plan for the UK Telecommunications Industry
- The Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in emergency situations

There is also a non-disclosure agreement which protects any shared information from being passed outside the emergency planning community.

The Memorandum of Understanding allows the sharing of human and material resources amongst providers when required in an emergency. This ensures that all Telecoms Operators who take part in a NEAT call can discuss problems with their own and other operator's networks in the knowledge that this information will be treated confidentially.

## **5. SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT**

In the event of an emergency where the severity is such that frequency management issues are raised during meeting with network operators, this may impact on Ofcom, who should then be alerted.

Ofcom is legally responsible for frequency management: any alert to Ofcom can take place via the Ofcom NEAT representative, or alternatively through the BIS JRT.

In certain (extreme) circumstances MNO's may require licence variations to allow them increased flexibility for a limited period of time – should this be required, Ofcom's involvement is necessary to legally clear this.

This is most likely to be required following a major emergency – should a service provider be required to incorporate use of different or additional services. For example:

- Should the military require civil spectrum to be requisitioned, e.g. for emergency communications, licence conditions would require alteration by Ofcom
- In the event of a collapse of an MNO's network, changes in the management of spectrum may be required and would need licence alteration by Ofcom

## **6. MEDIA HANDLING & PUBLIC INFORMATION STRATEGY**

A well thought out media handling strategy and the provision of appropriate, and accurate information to the public is an essential part of ensuring an effective response.

A telecommunications failure represents an additional challenge during the immediate information vacuum in that it should be assumed that day to day means of communication with the national broadcast media will be affected.

Information media representatives will require includes:

- **Update** – general statement on situation, including if appropriate geographical extent and any Casualties
- **Practical Information** – outline public safety advice and support available
- **Action** – outline of actions being taken, status of investigation if appropriate, resources, evacuation
- **Timescales** –outline steps towards restoring the networks and effected services

## **7. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The following are Powers available to the Secretary of State. For further information please refer to the document: BIS Guidance - Powers in Telecommunications Emergency.

### **7.1 Power to request Ofcom to make certain radio Frequencies available**

The provision providing power to the Secretary of State is Section 5 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006: Secretary of State may by order give directions requiring Ofcom to secure that specified radio frequencies are kept available or become available for uses as identified in the direction.

### **7.2 Power to direct Ofcom in respect of their management of electronic networks and the radio spectrum**

The provision providing power to the Secretary of State is section 5 of the Communications Act 2003: The Secretary of State may issue general or specific directions to OFCOM in relation to their management of electronic networks, services and the radio spectrum. Ofcom must comply with those directions. The Secretary of State may only issue direction for certain purposes:

- In the interests of National Security
- In the interests of public safety or public health

Directions issued by the Secretary of State under this power may not request that Ofcom suspend or restrict the entitlement of a provider to provide electronic communications network or services.

### **7.3 Power to direct Ofcom to issue a direction to suspend or restrict a network provider's entitlement to provide a communications network or service**

The provision providing power to Ofcom is section 132 (1) of the Communications Act 2003. The Secretary of State may direct Ofcom to issue a direction to a person who provides an electronic communications network or electronic communications service or who makes associated facilities available, suspending or restricting their entitlement to provide such a network or service. This may only be done if there are reasonable grounds for believing this is necessary to do so:

- To protect public safety or health
- In the interests of national security

No parliamentary procedure is required.

### **7.4 Power to issue directions of a general nature to Ofcom or providers of public electronic communications networks**

The provision for providing power to the Secretary of State is section 94 of the Telecommunications Act 1984. Secretary of State may give directions of a general character to Ofcom or telecommunications network providers as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary in the interests of national security. No parliamentary procedure is required.

However, grants may be made to network providers in order to offset any losses they may suffer as a result of complying with the direction.

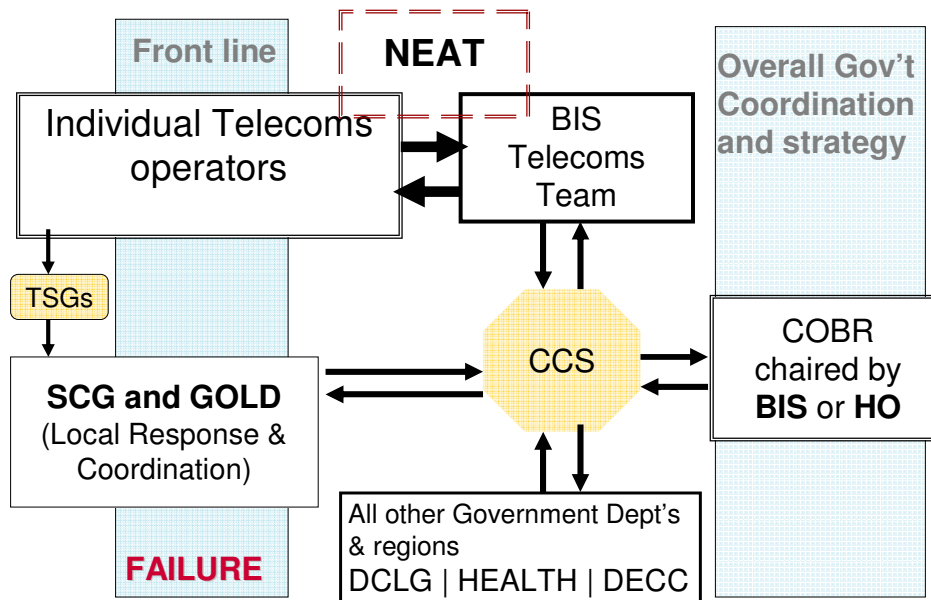
### **7.5 Power to require a network provider to cooperate with emergency services, councils and other bodies.**

The provision for this power is provided under section 5 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The Minister may by order require a person or body such as the emergency services or local councils to perform a function to take action in relation to a potential or actual emergency (including disruption of a system of communication). Minister may by order require a telephone network provider to cooperate with a body such as those listed above.

The provision providing power to the Secretary of State is Section 20 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Emergency Regulations may be made for the purposes of protecting human life, health or safety or of restoring a system of communication.

# Annex 1: FLOWCHART OF COMMUNICATIONS DURING A TELECOMS EMERGENCY

## Emergency Response **BERR** | Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform





## **ANNEX 2 - TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS**

EC-RRG	Electronic Communications - Resilience and Response Group
BIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
NEAT	National Emergency Alert for Telecoms
HO	Home Office
COBR	Cabinet Office Briefing Room
CNI	Critical National Infrastructure
CPNI	Centre for the Protection of Critical National Infrastructure
SCG	Strategic Co-ordinating Group
Gold	Gold Command Centre
TSG	Telecoms Sub Group
DCLG	Department for Culture and Local Government
DECC	Department for the Environment and Climate Change
CCS	Civil Contingencies Secretariat
SOS	Secretary of State
JRT	Joint Response Team
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
CCA	Civil Contingencies Act

## **ANNEX 3 – EC-RRG TERMS OF REFERENCE**

# **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

## **Electronic Communications Resilience and Response Group (EC-RRG)**

### **Goal**

To promote the availability of Electronic Communications infrastructure for the UK and provide an industry emergency response capability through the ownership and maintenance of the National Emergency Plan for Telecoms

### **Objectives:**

1. To take the lead in developing and maintaining cooperation between the telecommunication industry and government organisations through:
  - Planning, including ownership of the National Emergency Plan
  - Maintenance of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between all members.
  - Response, including enactment, maintenance and enhancement of NEAT
2. EC-RRG will own and maintain the National Emergency Plan for Telecoms and the National Emergency Alert for Telecoms
3. To follow and deliver against a structured annual work programme agreed by the group.
4. Exchange views on policy and technology issues that may impact on the resilience of the industry
5. Support cooperation between industry and government organisations to drive adoption of appropriate standards, policies and procedures for resilience
6. Promote greater understanding of the work of the group and the capabilities of the industry.
7. Act as a conduit for Government and Industry to consult with telecoms providers on matters of telecoms resilience.

### ***Membership***

1. Membership shall be voluntary with no fees payable.
2. There shall be two classes of membership: Strategy Group and Plenary Group.
3. Strategy Group membership will include representatives from
  - ECRRG industry chair and deputy chair
  - Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BIS)
  - Cabinet Office
  - The Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI)
  - Ofcom
4. Plenary Group membership
  - Representatives from the Strategy Group
  - Representatives of Qualifying operators<sup>1</sup>
  - Representatives of the devolved administrations

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<sup>1</sup> For definition of Qualifying Operators please refer to Annex A

- Government region with lead responsibility for Telecoms
  - Representatives from the MOD
  - Other parties at the discretion of the Strategy Group
5. New Members
    - New member companies and organisations should be proposed to the chair. Where they do not meet the criteria for 'Qualifying Operators' their application for membership should be put to the plenary group for discussion and, if necessary, a vote
  6. Replacements
    - Members should inform the Chair and Secretariat in writing if a new member of their company is replacing them in the Plenary Group. The number of representatives attending from any member organisation shall be at the discretion of the Chair.

## ***Roles***

### **Plenary group membership brings with it an expectation of active involvement in working groups and / or sub-groups**

1. Members
  - Hold a free and open exchange of views
  - Share experiences
  - Provide advice and support
  - Identify opportunities for co-operation and improvements to the "National Telecoms Plan"
  - Will notify the Chair and secretary of agenda items for the Plenary Group in advance of the Strategy Group meeting preceding the main EC-RRG meeting
  - Will notify and agree with the Chair in advance where it is relevant that a guest should be invited to EC-RRG
  - Communicate proposals and decisions to appropriate interested parties as determined by the group.
2. Plenary Group
  - Collectively owns the National Emergency Plan for Telecoms and the National Emergency Alert for Telecoms
  - Maintain a standing sub-group focussed on the maintenance of the National Emergency Plan for Telecoms, the National Emergency Alert for Telecoms and one responsible for executing a communications and publicity plan.
  - Own the annual work programme which sets out deliverables for EC-RRG
  - Initiate both intra- and inter-sector Working Groups as necessary to address specific areas.
3. Chair
  - Submit an annual report to CEOs of member companies as well as the Secretary of State for BIS and/or other relevant Ministers covering completed work and the proposed forward work plan, as well as on other significant activities of the group (e.g. a real emergency response)
  - May write to individual CEOs of member companies where this is relevant (e.g. where there has been exceptional contribution from specific members)
4. Strategy Group
  - Compile and oversee an annual EC-RRG work programme including setting out the deliverables for the wider group and subgroups.
  - Develop the agenda for each EC-RRG meeting
  - Meet in advance of each EC-RRG meeting in order to
    - Set forthcoming agenda
    - Discuss the delivery of the work programme against objectives

- Consider new areas of work and agenda items proposed by members
- Decide whether activation of subgroups or working groups is necessary
- Recommend to the plenary group topics for attention
- Provide assistance with problems which lie beyond the powers of the plenary group to resolve

#### 5. Subgroups / Working Groups

- Report back to Plenary group on delivery against the objectives they have been set
- Will provide progress updates as appropriate.
- Can decide how to operate and advise plenary group on levels of participation
- Confidentiality rules apply and are the responsibility of the Chair of the Working Group.

## ***Principles***

*The business of EC-RRG will be conducted within the following framework:*

- BIS will provide a secretariat, organise and host meetings and distribute of material.
- Notes will be taken by the secretary and distributed subsequently.
- Confidentiality will be observed in respect of sensitive material and information as defined by a Red Amber Green (RAG). Classification system
- As well as representing their employer's interests, delegates will actively participate in the work of the group as professionals in their own right.
- Any request for amendments to the Notes should be advised to the secretary in writing within 3 weeks of publication

## **Chair and Deputy Chair**

1. Chairmanship and Deputy Chairmanship of the Plenary Group will be provided by industry. Both parties will be members of, and elected by the Plenary Group. **The deputy chair must not be from the same organisation as the chair** (and are ideally from different parts of the sector where possible should not exclude people from applying).
2. The EC-RRG chair and deputy chair are required to act in an impartial way in respect of their own company's interests and will represent the views of industry as a whole
3. Exercise the role of EC-RRG deputy chair and next chair designate for a period of 1 year
4. After a period of 1 year in the role of deputy chair, assume the role of chair for a period of 1 year at which point a new Deputy Chair will be elected.
5. Contribute to the strategic direction of ECRRG including attendance of 4 meetings of the ECRRG stakeholder panel (meetings may be on the same day as plenary group meetings)
6. Chair and deputy chair will be members of the EC-RRG plenary group, and volunteers for these vacancies will be proposed from and voted on democratically by the plenary group
7. If the Chair or Deputy Chair are unable to carry out their full term, a replacement will be elected through the agreed system:
  - a. Members of the group may be nominated for the position of Chair or Deputy Chair. Nominees will complete a 'Nomination Statement' to be circulated to the group

- b. Members will then cast one vote per company for their chosen nominee
  - c. Government departments will not take part in the vote. EC-RRG secretariat will manage the voting process
  - d. If only one nominee is forthcoming for Chair or Deputy Chair plenary members will be asked to endorse that appointment by vote.
8. Chair and Deputy Chair can represent the view of the EC-RRG as a consultative body but this does not represent the view of the telecoms industry. Any other members wishing to represent the view of the EC-RRG should consult with the Chair and Deputy Chair before doing so.

## **Review**

This document to be reviewed every two years.

## ***Qualifying Operators***

Qualifying Operators are network operators considered to be part of the key electronic communications national infrastructure, and that satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- Communication Providers defined as Category 2 responders under the current Civil Contingencies Act.
- Operators providing “dial-tone” or its equivalent to end-users of public telecommunications services
- Operators providing Emergency Services Operator service
- Operators providing electronic communications services for use by the authorities or other sectors of key national infrastructure such as banking, railways, gas or power
- Operators providing communications links and transmitter facilities for broadcast networks
- Public Internet infrastructure operators
- Major internet service providers with >10% market share

Operators’ representatives are expected to be responsible for, or involved in, the management of their employer’s emergency or business continuity planning processes.