

Category 2 Responders - Generic Emergency Planning Arrangements

Telecommunications

Telecommunications are a vital part of the United Kingdom's critical infrastructure. The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) within Cabinet Office works closely with BERR, the Government Department with lead responsibility for Telecommunications. CCS is particularly focussed on enhancing the resilience of communications of the community of Category 1 and 2 responders (as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act (2004)). Category 2 responders include a number of **telecommunications network providers**. The **Electronic Communication – Resilience and Response Group** (EC-RRG) is central to the Government's activities.

Category 2 Telecommunications Network Providers

The Civil Contingencies Act (2004), at Schedule 1, Part 3, identifies Category 2 responders to include "a person who provides a public electronic communications network which makes telephone services available (whether for spoken communication or the transmission of data)". Where reference to provision of a "network" is interpreted in accordance with section 32(4)(a) and (b) of the **Communications Act 2003** [External website] (c.21) and "public electronic communications network" has the meaning given by sections 32(1) and 151(1) of that Act. Responders that fall within this definition include, amongst others, "fixed" providers such as:

BT, [External website]
Cable and Wireless,
Kingston Communications, and

and "mobile" providers such as:

3,
O2,
Orange,
T-Mobile and
Vodafone.

The Electronic Communication – Resilience and Response Group (EC-RRG)

The EC-RRG promotes the availability of electronic communications infrastructures in the UK and provides an industry emergency response capability through ownership and maintenance of the National Emergency Plan for Telecommunications.

The Group is chaired by an industry representative and hosted by BIS (the Department for Business Innovation and Skills). The current chair (2010/11) is Geoff Eveleigh of O2. The Group meets quarterly: a Strategy Board is convened to shape the agenda of the Plenary session at which all members are invited to participate.

The Group takes the lead in developing and maintaining co-operation between the telecommunication industry and government through:

Providing a forum for exchanging information between industry experts in telecommunications resilience and those parts of government with a policy interest in resilience
Planning (including ownership of the **National Emergency Plan for the Telecommunications Sector**) and

Providing a response capability to emergencies through **NEAT, (the National Emergency Alert for Telecommunications)**.

The **Terms of Reference** provide further details of the Group

Organisational membership of the Group

Network operators that provide key aspects of the national telecommunications infrastructure (including but not limited to **Category 2 responders** as defined by the CCA (20004));
LINX, representing the Internet sector;
Telehouse Europe, representing the data warehouse sector;
Airwave Solutions Ltd, that provides the secure and resilient mobile telecommunications system for the Emergency Services;
Ofcom, the telecommunications regulator;
BIS, Department for Business Innovation and Skills that has lead responsibility for telecommunications within government;
Cabinet Office, Civil Contingencies Secretariat;
CPNI, Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure;
MOD, Ministry of Defence
Government Office SE, the Office with lead responsibility for telecommunications and
Representatives from the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly.

Participation

Members are expected to be responsible for, or involved in, the management of their employer's emergency or business continuity planning arrangements.

Members who have subscribed to the National Resilience Extranet (NRE) have access to the secure shared EC-RRG Forum Group. The NRE is a secure web-based browser tool that enables the UK resilience community to access key information up to and including RESTRICTED for multi-agency working and communication.

Information posted on the Forum includes:

Agendas and papers circulated for consideration at all meetings;
The minutes of all meetings;
Documents developed by the **Working Groups**; and
Member's contact details, including those for **NEAT**

Working Groups

Working Groups have been established to focus on specific telecommunications resilience enhancing objectives that include:

Planning for fuel related emergencies;
The annual exercise of **NEAT**;
Enhancing wider resilience through developing a clearer understanding of the interdependencies between the energy and telecommunications sectors;
Collective response to the Pitt review into the flooding in England 2007 and
Enhancing resilience to denial of access to premises such as gaining access to premises that may be within a police cordon.

The following documents delivered by the Group may be of assistance in developing arrangements for business continuity and emergency planning:

- **An introduction to the structure of UK telecommunications sector**
- **EC-RRG Resilience Guidelines**

NEAT –National Emergency Alert for Telecommunications

NEAT is a protocol for sharing information among members of the Group. NEAT is triggered in the event of circumstances that may effect the operation of telecommunications networks. The process provides a conduit for information between industry members of the Group, between industry and government and within members' organisations that enables the widest possible picture of impacts to be assessed. Members of the Group meet virtually and assemble a situation report. The report provides a shared understanding of the situation which becomes central to determining actions that are needed to rectify any identified problems. A shared understanding had been found to be particularly valuable at the outset of a response to an incident when the situation is often at its most ambiguous.

NEAT has been central to providing a telecommunications sector response to incidents that have included: the bombs in Central London (2005); the explosion and fire that engulfed the oil depot at Buncefield, England (2005) and the flooding that inundated Gloucester in central England (2007). The NEAT protocol was integrated into Exercise White Noise a Department for Business Innovation and Skills led exercise held in November 2009 that simulated a sector response to a major telecommunications incident. Exercise White Noise formed part of the National Preparedness Programme annual exercise series and brought together the relevant parts of Government, including the Devolved Administrations, with industry partners to test the response to a failure of the UK telecommunication network.

Confidence in the NEAT protocol is maintained through regular testing that contact can be established with members and specific aspects of the protocol have been exercised annually since 2004 through the EMPEX exercise programme.