

EC-RRG

Electronic Communications
Resilience & Response Group
(formerly the TI-EPF)
Protecting communications

Telecommunication support in an emergency

Overview

It is recognised that telecommunications forms an important part of the United Kingdom's 'Critical National Infrastructure': it supports the governmental, commercial and social life of the nation. Some major communication providers, government and the regulator have worked together to formulate a National Emergency Plan for this sector. This plan is now complete and was launched on 20th May 2003.

Electronic Communication – Resilience & Response Group (EC-RRG)

The telecommunication sector has formed a voluntary organisation called Electronic Communication – Resilience & Response Group (EC-RRG). EC-RRG enables the co-ordination of the sectors response to an emergency and where appropriate promotes best practice.

EC-RRG is tripartite organisation made up of major industry players, particularly category 2 responders, appropriate government departments and the sector regulator.

The members of EC-RRG have co-operated in the creation of the emergency plan. These providers include fixed and mobile operators as well as representatives from the Internet. Government departments have also taken an active role.

All those companies and government representatives meet in a regular forum to discuss issues relating to emergency planning and to develop and maintain the common approach specified in the plan.

Exercises

EC-RRG runs an annual sector exercise. These have a number of objectives:

- Test the sector wide NEAT process
- Provide an opportunity for individual companies to test their internal BCP.
- Explore realistic modes of failure
- Promote co-operation and communication between the electronic communication sector, other parts of the CNI and government (National, Devolved and Local)

The exercises have covered scenarios that have involved terrorism, extreme weather and extensive power failure.

Governance

The EC-RRG is owned by the membership: chairmanship is provided by CSIA but this does not infer ownership by the cabinet office

Who are members

EC-RRG Members		
Category 2 Responders	Other Industry Representatives	Government & Regulator
3	Airwave	CSIA (as Chair) Cabinet Office
BT	AT and T	BERR
Cable & Wireless	Level 3	CCS - Cabinet Office
COLT	LINX	CPNI
Global Crossing	National Grid Wireless	Ofcom
KCOM Group	Telehouse Europe	Scottish Executive
O ₂		
Orange		
T Mobile		
Telewest		
Thus		
Verizon Business		
Virgin Media		
Vodafone		

Telecommunications in an emergency

A number of documents are available that will inform the emergency planning community:

- An Introduction to the Structure of UK Telecommunications Sector
- Telecommunications Resilience Good Practice Guide (NISCC)
- TI-EPF Resilience Guidelines for Providers of Critical National Telecommunication Infrastructure

The Telecommunications National Emergency Plan

The Plan itself comprises:

- A list of key contacts in Communications Providers and government;

- Details of the Emergency Planning Forum;
- The agreed process for monitoring and managing emergencies;
- A description of the varying kinds of emergency scenario that could occur;
- Encourages best practice in maintaining network security and integrity;
- Refers to a separate Memorandum of Understanding between Communications Providers on mutual assistance in emergencies;
- In the absence of any specific guidance from government, defines what should be considered as priority services and priority customer groups.

All these aspects of the plan are under continuous review.

Interdependency with other sectors

All sectors of the economy depend heavily on communications for their own business continuity. EC-RRG is working closely with government departments to determine the essential needs of these sectors, in particular the financial services sector and the energy sector. EC-RRG is also ensuring that the essential needs of the telecommunications industry during emergencies are recognised by government departments.

Resilience of the National Telecommunications Infrastructure

In addition to the creation of a Telecommunications National Emergency Plan, EC-RRG is responsible for EC-RRG Resilience Guidelines. This document sets out guidance about appropriate measures the telecommunication sector should take to ensure that their networks perform reliably in the face of internal and external threats.

The Future

The Emergency Planning Forum will continue to develop the Telecommunications National Emergency Plan and integrate it with the emergency plans of other UK sectors. It will also continue to arrange an annual exercise that tests the Plan.