



The Turks and Caicos Islands Telecommunications Emergency Preparedness and Response Policy (TEPRP)

Obligations

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Purpose of this document

1. The Telecommunications Commission ('the Commission') of the Turks & Caicos Islands ('TCI') has prepared the Telecommunications Emergency and Preparedness Response Policy with the aim of ensuring that the TCI has resilient networks which can enable the availability and operability of telecoms services in disaster scenarios.
2. This document is a summary of the TEPRP containing the obligations for the Telecommunications Commission and telecoms operators therein which the Commission has decided to publish separately here for easy reference.
3. The full TEPRP can be found at <https://telecommission.tc/commission-decisions-2021/>.

TEPRP obligations

4. The TEPRP identifies obligations which apply across the four phases of disasters as defined by the ITU: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. These obligations are set out below.

1 MITIGATION	The mitigation phase aims to minimise the adverse effects of disaster events. This requires that operators should:
Familiarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all senior management are familiar with the Disaster Management Ordinance, and have systems and processes in place to meet requirements therein.
Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with DDME on the TCI vulnerability assessment and ensure this is communicated to staff for disaster management purposes. Ensure DDME includes up-to-date disaster telecoms arrangements in its preparedness communications to the TCI public.
Contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare, maintain and disseminate contact directories for leadership team members, employees and contractors, who have key roles in disaster management. The detail of such directories and their distribution should be for each operator to decide according to their operational and leadership structures, but it is expected that they will include information on roles, rosters, alternate contacts, and ensure no single point of failure.
Notify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where operators become aware of a national or local incident which renders critical telecoms infrastructure inoperable, or which limits communications with emergency services, for more than 30 minutes, they must notify both DDME and the Commission immediately.
Import deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that planning and operational activities include arrangements to deploy imported resources efficiently.
2 PREPAREDNESS	The preparedness phase plans for the effective management of emergencies and for prompt responses to affected communities. This includes establishing operating and contingency plans, infrastructure sharing arrangements, and early warning systems.
SOPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed operators shall maintain Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure availability of essential communications services as far as possible throughout the four phases of emergencies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOPs should include arrangements for the provision of essential facilities to maintain and support communications within and between government, Cabinet, EPC, NDAC and NDAC sub-Committees, first responders and other emergency services. • SOPs shall be tested through simulations and/or drills and communicated to all stakeholders who are required to collaborate in their execution. • All staff and other stakeholders involved in the execution of SOPs should be appropriately trained. • SOPs should incorporate contingency plans covering, inter-alia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arrangements for redundancy within each operator's network during emergencies. ○ Arrangements for carrying emergency calls, and calls relating to disaster response and humanitarian relief efforts as identified by the Government, between networks (referencing the EPA). ○ Ensuring resilience, maintenance, servicing, back-up, stress testing and security of emergency telecoms infrastructure for rapid deployment, including portable base stations, servers, generators, batteries, and IT equipment. ○ Plans for deployment of emergency telecoms infrastructure. ○ Arrangements for deployment of emergency resources (such as High Altitude Pseudo Satellites (HAPS)) and imported equipment. ○ Plans to secure and clear business facilities and property (e.g, roof/doors/windows/drains), including identifying and prioritising repairs, leak proofing, hazard clearing, and availability of e.g. tarpaulins and sandbags. ○ Plans for maintaining and distributing adequate stocks of tools, food, water and first aid supplies. ○ Evacuation plans and protocols, including signposting of availability/safe location/fuelling of evacuation vehicles. ○ Clear frameworks for speedy and flexible decision-making, including identification of command centres and protocols. ○ Clear frameworks for communications, including availability of satellite handsets / other network handsets / two-way radios for key personnel in Grand Turk, North Caicos, and Providenciales. ○ Situational awareness systems to provide up-to-date information. ○ Staff / stakeholders involved in planning should be trained.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOPs should be subject to annual tests/simulations/drills.
Asset inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed operators shall prepare and maintain inventories of critical national telecoms infrastructure and services, including associated essential equipment and facilities. • This should include information by geographic location on: number of cells, availability of movable cell towers and other facilities to provide resilience, availability of power back-up systems (e.g. batteries or portable generators), network type and quality. • It should identify areas where facilities are vulnerable and/or network connectivity is poor. Inventories should be reviewed and updated regularly, and should be submitted annually by each operator to the Commission as part of the operator's Disaster Preparedness Report.
Early warning and alert systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOPs should incorporate disaster alert systems coordinated with the National Multi-Hazard Alert and National Broadcast Emergency Systems. • Alert systems should be harmonised and interoperable in accordance with systems and agreements established by the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands for use in emergencies and disasters. This should include the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) to disseminate information (e.g. cell or SMS broadcasts, websites) if this system is adopted by the Government. • Arrangements for alert responses should be documented in SOPs. • Staff operating alert systems should be appropriately trained. • Alert systems should be tested and assured at least once a year.
Arrangements to support people with specific needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed operators should do everything they can to ensure that essential services remain available to all of their customers in emergency and disaster scenarios. • Operators should aim to identify vulnerable customers and those with with specific communications needs during emergencies (e.g. those with hearing or sight difficulties, or older or digitally excluded people). • Operators should use multiple modes of communication to provide information before, during and after disasters, in order to reach as many of these people as possible. • They should incorporate these measures in their SOPs and contingency plans as appropriate.

Disaster Preparedness Report (DPR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed operators shall submit a Disaster Preparedness Report to the Commission by 30 April each year, setting out their SOPs, asset inventories, contingency plans, early warning and alert systems, and arrangements to support people with specific needs.
Telecoms Sector Disaster Vulnerability Report (TSDVR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having received operator Disaster Preparedness Reports, the Commission will prepare a Telecoms Sector Disaster Vulnerability Report (TSDVR) by 31 May each year. • In preparing the TSDVR the Commission may under section 36(g) of the Telecommunications Ordinance and clause 19 of the operators spectrum license visit operator sites and other installations to inspect equipment and validate reports. • If the Commission identifies vulnerabilities, weaknesses and risks, it may direct operators to remedy these.
Emergency Preparedness Agreement (EPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed operators must agree (or the Commission will mandate) an EPA, covering the mutual use of infrastructure in order to maximise the availability of communication channels during times of emergency (as declared by the Governor) for the purpose of connecting calls relating to emergency calls, disaster response and humanitarian relief efforts. This will help with the targeting of supplies, resources and support to the most affected people in the most hard-hit areas, and with the management of logistics to help rebuild national infrastructure, as quickly as possible. • The EPA must be completed and agreed by the operators within 30 days after finalisation of the TEPRP, or the Commission will impose an EPA.
3 RESPONSE	The response phase takes place during a disaster, as declared by the Governor or DDME. It involves executing the preparedness phase plans. It aims to minimise loss of life, injury and damage to property and infrastructure, by minimising service disruption.
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response should be as speedy as possible, coordinated through the command (emergency operations) centre.
Rapidity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOPs, the EPA, contingency planning, and arrangements for customers with special needs should be activated as quickly as possible without operational, logistical, or administrative hurdles, which would slow appropriate responses to incidents.
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses should be capable of flexing to meet the specific needs of each disaster scenario. Response systems and processes should

	be designed to enable quick decision making, and to adjust and re-prioritise if needed in response to real-time situation changes.
4 RECOVERY	The recovery phase takes place after a disaster. It aims to restore health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets. Recovery should take account of the operational needs of the telecoms sector, its stakeholders and the wider TCI community.
Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of network facilities should happen as fast as possible and to the extent possible. • Restoration should consider cost-effective improvements to reduce risk of damage to facilities and loss of services in the future.
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each operator should coordinate restoration work across all suppliers, contractors, citizens and locations, e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing situational awareness information to target, coordinate and prioritise repair work. ○ Liaising between networks to ensure the connection of emergency calls, and calls to support disaster response and humanitarian relief efforts, and to support any directions by DDME or the Commission in times of emergency. ○ Temporary facilities sharing under the EPA and/or national roaming arrangements to ensure that customers of both networks can access restored services as quickly as possible.
Customer and citizen information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators should do all they can to provide information on service restoration to customers and other citizens, working with stakeholders and through the National Disaster Management Plan framework.
Community support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators should do all they can to support communities in recovery work outside of the sector, for example by disseminating information on availability of critical facilities and services such as health services, food banks, and emergency shelter.
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators should identify and report to the Commission on the main challenges experienced during the disaster, including damage levels, impact, response and recovery time, remedial actions within 90 days of declaration by the Governor of the ending of an emergency. This information should be used to improve disaster response and management plans.

Annex: Definitions

This document uses the following definitions.

- **The Commission:** The Turks and Caicos Telecommunications Commission, established in 2004, through the enactment of the Telecommunications Ordinance 2004.
- **Disaster Preparedness Report ('DPR'):** A report submitted annually by each licensed operator on or before 30 April setting out their standard operating procedures, asset inventories, contingency plans, early warning and alert systems, and arrangements to support people with specific needs.
- **Emergency Preparedness Agreement ('EPA'):** an agreement established by Licensed Operators governing infrastructure sharing arrangements between operators in the event of network failure.
- **Telecommunications Emergency and Preparedness Response Policy:** ('TEPRP') sets rules and obligations on telecoms operators and the Commission, with the aim of ensuring continuity of networks and services in disaster scenarios, so these can be used optimally to support an effective and coordinated response.
- **Telecommunications Sector Disaster Vulnerability Report:** A report prepared annually by the Commission using information and data provided to them by licensed operators in the Disaster Preparedness Reports.