

Victorian Gas Emergency Public Communications Teleconferences – Standard Operating Procedure

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1.	Purpose and scope	3
1.2.	Glossary	4
1.3.	Definitions and Interpretation	4
1.4.	Related AEMO policies and procedures	4
2.	Key roles and responsibilities	4
3.	Flow chart	6
4.	Communication channels	7
4.1.	Media Duty Officers Teleconference (MDOTC)	7
4.2.	Public Communications Teleconference (PCTC)	9
4.3.	Operational emergency teleconferences	11
5.	Appendices	12
A.1	Appendix 1 – Media Duty Officers Teleconference, Agenda Template	12
A.2	Appendix 2 – Media Duty Officers Teleconference, Minutes and Actions Template	13
A.3	Appendix 3 – Public Communications Teleconference, Agenda Template	14
A.4	Appendix 4 – Public Communications Teleconference, Minutes and Actions Template	15
A.5	Appendix 5 – Single industry spokesperson expectations	16

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1	10/07/2024	Jonathon Geddes	Serge Stojanovic	Jonathon Geddes	Paul Zennaro	New document

1 Introduction

1.1. Purpose and scope

The Victorian Gas Emergency Public Communications Teleconferences Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the procedures for organisations that are anticipated to be involved in managing the communications and media engagement during a gas emergency event in Victoria.

Victorian gas companies (producers, pipeline owners, retailers) directly manage media relations for their individual day-to-day business and network-related issues in Victoria. However, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has a specified emergency coordination and media relations role when a Level 5 gas network emergency has been declared.

The procedures described in this document are designed to ensure that media, customers, and the general Victorian public receive coordinated and timely information. These procedures also ensure that this communication is pre-approved and that it provides clear advice about the status of a gas emergency or issue.

Other operational and procedural aspects of a gas emergency including classifying gas events and emergencies into categories, responsibilities and processes to manage and coordinate gas events and emergencies and processes to facilitate timely and effective communication between all organisations in the situation of a threat to a Victorian Declared Transmission System and/or Declared Distribution System (Declared system) are covered by other Laws and Procedures, including the Gas Emergency Protocol (Protocol) made by AEMO under clause 53 of the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008, of which the Emergency Procedures (Gas) are a component.

This standard operating procedure is not intended to be publicly available, nor published on the AEMO website. Distribution will be limited to organisations who are anticipated to be involved in a gas event or gas emergency.

This standard operating procedure should be read in conjunction with the Gas Emergency Protocol (Protocol) made by AEMO under clause 53 of the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008, which includes the Emergency Procedures (Gas), and in the event of inconsistency the Emergency Procedures (Gas) prevails.

1.1.1. Multijurisdictional events

When a gas emergency impacts, or may impact, multiple jurisdictions, the multi-jurisdictional response is managed and coordinated through the National Gas Emergency Response Advisory Committee (NGERAC) processes and procedures and, other than de-conflicting the various teleconferences, should not significantly alter the procedure outlined in this process.

While it is unlikely to operate in parallel, it may be necessary for the Emergency Procedures (Gas) to operate in support of the Victorian response. A designated AEMO contact and the department that is the control agency for energy emergencies (**Department**) will provide the conduit between the Victorian jurisdiction and the national response in accordance with pre-established plans.

1.2. Glossary

Table 1 Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
Department	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action or the department that is the control agency for energy emergencies
DNSP	Distribution Network Service Provider
DOTC	Duty Officers Teleconference
DWGM	Victorian Declared Wholesale Gas Market
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
EP (Gas)	Emergency Procedures (Gas)
Energy Safe	Energy Safe Victoria
EMJPIC	Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee
GEMCF	Gas Emergency Management Consultative Forum
MDOTC	Media Duty Officers Teleconference
NGERAC	National Gas Emergency Response Advisory Committee
PCTC	Public Communications Teleconference
SCC	State Control Centre
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TTSS	Threat to System Security

1.3. Definitions and Interpretation

Terms defined in the National Gas Law, the National Gas Rules, and the Emergency Procedures (Gas) have the same meanings in these standard operating procedures unless otherwise specified.

These standard operating procedures are subject to the principles of interpretation set out in Schedule 2 of the National Gas Law.

1.4. Related AEMO policies and procedures

Table 2 Related policies, procedures, instructions, and forms

Title	Location
AEMO Emergency Procedures (Gas)	
AEMO Emergency Procedures (Gas) Teleconference SOP	
NGERAC – Interruption to Gas Supply Plan	

2. Key roles and responsibilities

The following table sets out the primary organisations who have a role or function under this standard operating procedure (specified by position or group as appropriate), and briefly describes their responsibility.

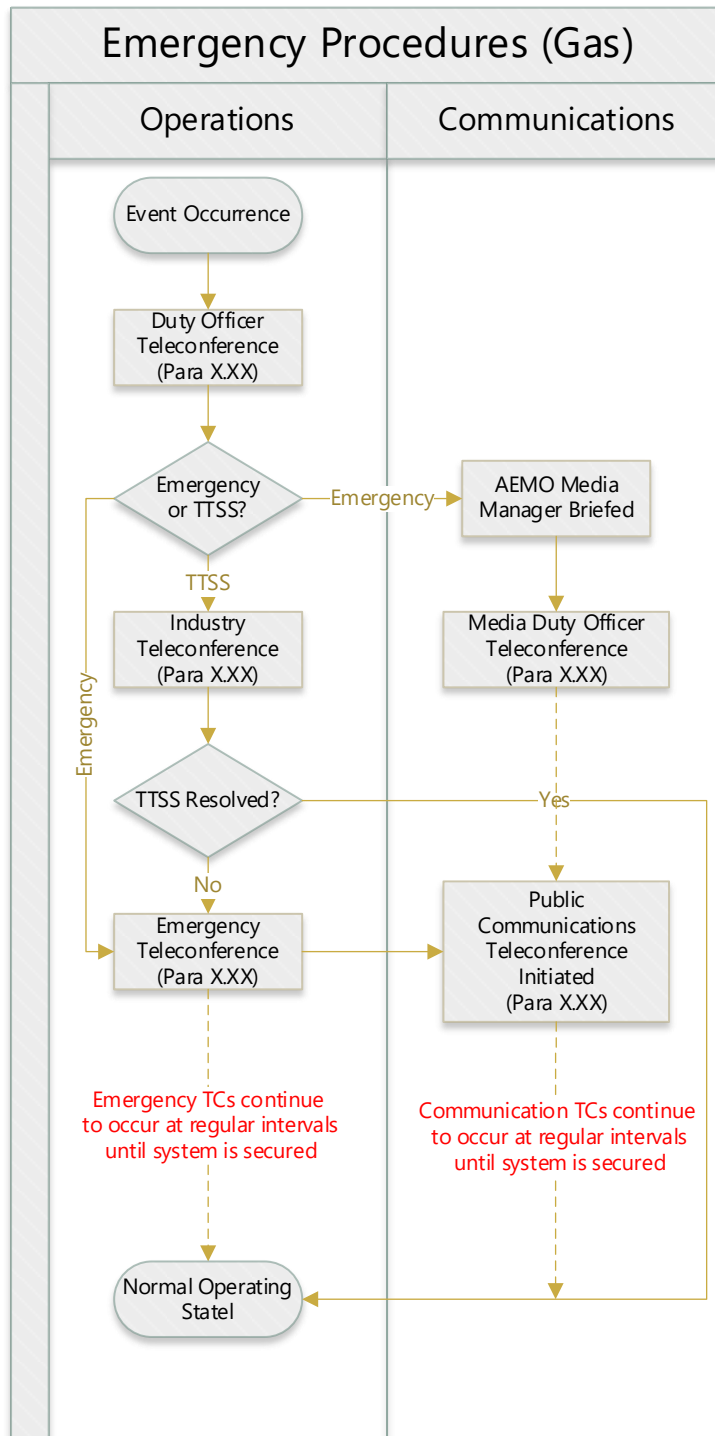
Table 3 Position or Group responsibilities under this standard operating procedure

Position or Group	Responsibility
AEMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead role in activating and facilitating the various teleconferences. • Feed minutes and next steps back to the AEMO Gas Duty Manager and provide updates on actions of the Media Duty Officers Teleconference (MDOTC) and the Public Communications Teleconference (PCTC) during emergency teleconferences.
Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation (and contribution) to all teleconferences • Preparation and Enactment of Emergency Powers under the <i>Gas Industry Act</i>, as required. • Support government communications to align with communications agreed during PCTC, including other departments and agencies through the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC) and the State Control Centre (SCC) Public Information unit.
Energy Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation (and contribution) to all teleconferences • Preparation and Enactment of Emergency Powers under the <i>Gas Safety Act</i>, as required. • Release of public facing communications aligning with those agreed during PCTC, focusing on safety issues
Registered participants in the Victorian Declared Wholesale Gas Market (DWGM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation (and contribution) to MDOTC on invitation. • Participation (and contribution) to PCTC. • Release of public facing communications aligning with those agreed during PCTC.
Other asset owners or departments/agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation (and contribution) to PCTC on invitation.

3. Flow chart

The following flow chart outlines the communication protocol throughout any gas event or emergency in Victoria, in its simplest form.

Figure 1 Teleconference flowchart



4. Communication channels

Communication and coordination during an emergency event are critically important if issues are to be effectively addressed and consequences minimised.

The conduct of the various communication channels for the purpose of coordinating public communications is outlined in detail within this chapter. Channels for coordinating operational matters are captured in AEMO's separate Emergency Procedures (Gas) Teleconferences SOP.

4.1. Media Duty Officers Teleconference (MDOTC)

4.1.1. Purpose

The purpose of the MDOTC is to quickly bring together the key media and communications representatives of AEMO, the Department and Energy Safe in the event of gas emergency or Threat to System Security (TTSS) to re-confirm details of the gas issue/emergency, and to agree on a high-level communications strategy, external messages, next-step actions and timing for the Public Communications Teleconference (PCTC) (which includes with Victorian gas asset owners, operators and gas retailers) if needed.

4.1.2. Triggers

The MDOTC is triggered by decision of Duty Officers at a Duty Officers Teleconference (DOTC) under the Emergency Procedures (Gas), in accordance with the process flowchart in Figure 1, and will typically follow AEMO issuing a TTSS Notice for Victoria.

The AEMO Media Duty Manager will be informed of the need for a MDOTC and potential for an Emergency Teleconference under the Emergency Procedures (Gas) by the AEMO Chair of the DOTC.

4.1.3. Participants

The following representatives are expected to participate in the MDOTC. The AEMO Media Duty Manager will act as chair of an MDOTC.

1. AEMO Media Duty Manager (DM).
2. Department Energy Communications.
3. Energy Safe Media and Communications.
4. Media and/or Communications representative of relevant Registered Participants (if deemed necessary and on invitation only).

4.1.4. Activation

The AEMO Media Duty Manager will send the notification and details of the MDOTC to participants.

Activation of the MDOTC will consist of an initial SMS from AEMO giving forewarning of MDOTC. The aim of this notification is to notify that MDOTC will occur and allow participants a

short period to prepare but also to notify them that an automated phone for joining the MDOTC call will occur, so that the SMS is not summarily dismissed as a nuisance call.

This notification will be closely followed by an email, a further SMS and automated voice phone which will provide joining details. The automated call will allow participants to directly join the call through a number of dial pad strokes. This is designed to facilitate an easy, convenient and expedited means to join the call (see below).

4.1.5. Scheduling of teleconference

An MDOTC may be scheduled with advance notice, but in most instances, this will occur as an extension of the initial industry teleconference notification. Should an MDOTC be scheduled in advance, an SMS and email notification will provide details of timings and dial-in information.

Further MDOTCs will be organised on an as-required basis, and will be deactivated on the agreement of AEMO, Energy Safe, and the Department.

4.1.6. Teleconference conduct

1. Roll call – the AEMO Media Duty Manager will conduct a role call by organisational name. Confirmation of attendance is all that is required.
2. Agenda – AEMO will follow the agenda set out in **Appendix 1**. Where applicable, AEMO may deviate from the agenda for meeting efficiency.
3. Report by exception – the primary rule is do not speak unless pertinent to the objective of the meeting or item being discussed.
4. Dialling in of additional attendees – if deemed necessary, additional participants invited from relevant Registered Participants may be dialled in at any point during the meeting.
5. Minutes and actions – AEMO will document the MDOTC and circulate the minutes and actions at the conclusion of each MDOTC, or as quickly as practicable afterwards.

4.1.7. Meeting minutes and actions

A summary of the MDOTC and next steps will be compiled and disseminated by AEMO's Media Duty Manager. This will be in the form of meeting minutes and actions using the template attached in **Appendix 2**. Participants at MDOTCs should also retain their own notes of the MDOTC.

4.1.8. Desired outcomes

The following outcomes are expected from the MDOTC:

- A common understanding of the public communications situation, including a high-level communications approach and external messaging, is socialised across all three organisations and any invited Registered participants.
- Agreement on a single industry spokesperson or that this should be agreed to during the PCTC – for reference a list of expectations of the single industry spokesperson is contained in **Appendix 5**.

- Communication and media teams within all organisations brought to a higher state of readiness.
- Agreement reached on next steps and timing for a PCTC.

4.2. Public Communications Teleconference (PCTC)

4.2.1. Purpose

The PCTC will follow the MDOTC (refer to Figure 1).

The purpose of a PCTC is to brief media and communication representatives of Registered participants on the gas event or emergency and the associated communications approach agreed at the MDOTC, along with approved communications materials for sharing.

Media statements and social media content will be supported by information from the Registered participants involved or impacted by the gas event or emergency.

4.2.2. Triggers

The PCTC is activated by AEMO and the activation of the Emergency Teleconference under AEMO’s Emergency Procedures (Gas) Emergency Teleconferences SOP, as identified in Figure 1.

4.2.3. Participants

Representatives of all Registered participants are eligible (and strongly requested) to attend the PCTC.

Table 1 Public Communications Teleconference participants

Teleconference		Attendees
Public Communications Teleconference	MDOTC	AEMO Media Manager (Chair)
		Department Energy Communications (Coordinate)
		Energy Safe Communications (Safety regulator)
	MDOTC (By invitation)	Gas distribution businesses
		Gas transmission pipeline owners
		Gas retailers
		Other departments/emergency services
	Other agencies and/or National Electricity Market (NEM) participants (if deemed appropriate)	

4.2.4. Activation

AEMO’s Media Duty Manager will send notice and details of the PCTC to participants. PCTCs will be scheduled as required to confirm the approach and content for public communications.

4.2.5. Scheduling of teleconference

The timing of the PCTC will typically be decided during a meeting of the MDOTC.

The AEMO Media Duty Manager will send notice to participants of the intent to conduct a teleconference. The correspondence will have:

- Name of event.
- Reason for teleconference.
- Date and time of teleconference.
- Dial in details.

Further instances of the PCTC will be organised as needed by agreement by AEMO, the Department and Energy Safe. A PCTC will be deactivated by agreement of AEMO, Energy Safe and the Department.

4.2.6. Teleconference conduct

The following outlines the conduct of the PCTC:

1. Roll call – AEMO’s Media Duty Manager will conduct a role call by organisational name. Confirmation of attendance is all that is required.
2. Agenda – AEMO will follow the agenda set out in **Appendix 3**. Where applicable, AEMO may deviate from the agenda for meeting efficiency.
3. Report by exception – the primary rule is do not speak unless pertinent to the objective of the meeting or item being discussed.
4. Minutes and actions – AEMO will document PCTCs and circulate the minutes and actions at the conclusion of each PCTC, or as quickly as practicable afterwards.

4.2.7. Meeting minutes and actions

A summary of the PCTC and next steps will be compiled and disseminated by AEMO’s Media Duty Manager. This will be in the form of meeting minutes and actions using the template attached in **Appendix 4**. Members should also retain their own notes of these sessions.

4.2.8. Desired outcomes

The following outcomes are expected from the PCTC:

- A common understanding of the event and the coordinated approach to public communications is socialised across all attending organisations, including insights from Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC) provided by the Department representatives.
- Agreement on a single industry spokesperson (if required) – for reference a list of expectations of the single industry spokesperson is contained in **Appendix 5**.
- Communications, media teams and call centre personnel within each organisation can be activated (if deemed necessary)

- Agreement reached on next steps, including requirement for ongoing PCTCs.

The Department will brief EMJPIC on the Department and industry’s coordinated approach to public communications.

4.2.9. Public information

Nothing within this standard operating procedure precludes a Registered participant from communicating impacts of an event in accordance with its own commercial obligations. It is anticipated that each Registered participant’s communications will align with the media approach coordinated through this standard operating procedure to the extent possible.

Teleconferences activated under this standard operating procedure may seek advice from attendees on public messages issued by the attendee and notices received by the attendee as a form of situational awareness.

4.3. Operational emergency teleconferences

As captured in Figure 1, a DOTC, Industry Teleconference or Emergency Teleconference Emergency Procedures (Gas) can be established to run in parallel to the MDOTC or PCTC. Their purpose is to provide forums to establish the coordination and shared operational response to a gas emergency which meets the appropriate triggers in the Emergency Procedures (Gas). The AEMO Media Manager will inform the MDOTC and PCTC of the activities of these teleconferences as necessary.

5. Appendices

A.1 Appendix 1 – Media Duty Officers Teleconference, Agenda Template

Agenda is subject to change to suit the intent of the teleconference.

<i>Report by exception only</i>		Responsible
Teleconference Statement of Intent:		AEMO Media DM
Roll call		
AEMO		
Energy Safe		
Department		
<i>Add other attendees (business name only)</i>		
Situation Report:		
Update of current situation:	What/ When Occurred: Impact: Communications Actions Undertaken: Industry spokesperson decision: Method:	AEMO
Next steps/ considerations		
AEMO		Media representatives from involved parties
Department		
Energy Safe		
Other:	Points of interest media & socials:	
Next meeting:		Chair

A.2 Appendix 2 – Media Duty Officers Teleconference, Minutes and Actions Template

DATE:

TIME:

<i>Report by exception only</i>		Responsible
Teleconference Statement of Intent:		AEMO Media DM
Attendees		
Summary of actions		
Action	Details	Responsible
Next meeting:		

A.3 Appendix 3 – Public Communications Teleconference, Agenda Template

<i>Report by exception only</i>		Responsible
Teleconference Statement of Intent:		AEMO Media DM
Roll call		
AEMO		
Energy Safe		
Department		
<i>Add other attendees (business name only)</i>		
Situation Report:		
Update of current situation:	What occurred: When it occurred: Impact on Operations: Communications Actions Undertaken:	AEMO
Summary of communications with stakeholders and public		
AEMO	Communications to date: Who with: Method: Next steps/ considerations:	Media representatives from involved parties
Department	Communications to date: Who with: Method: Next steps/ considerations:	
Energy Safe	Communications to date: Who with: Method: Next steps/ considerations:	
Distribution Business	Communications to date: Who with: Method: Next steps/ considerations:	
Retailers	Communications to date: Who with: Method: Next steps/ considerations:	
Other:	Points of interest media & socials:	
Requirement for AEMO Single Industry Spokesperson:		
Agreed Key message considerations		
Key Message		Chair / All
Next meeting:		Chair

A.4 Appendix 4 – Public Communications Teleconference, Minutes and Actions Template

DATE:

TIME:

<i>Report by exception only</i>		Responsible
Teleconference Statement of Intent:		AEMO Media DM
Attendees		
Summary of actions		
Action	Details	Responsible
Agreed Key message considerations		
Key Message		
Next meeting:		

A.5 Appendix 5 – Single industry spokesperson expectations

When invoked, the single industry spokesperson is generally expected to provide the media with:

- Aggregated numbers of affected customers.
- Overview of areas/regions most affected.
- Cause/s of incident.
- Broad expectations regarding restoration and time to repair damaged assets (if applicable).
- General description regarding the event (for example, 1-in-100-year event).
- Safety messages.
- Referrals to individual distribution network service providers (DNSPs) for more specific information about individual events and responses. It is preferred that the spokesperson does not mention individual DNSPs, however some leeway is appropriate in the context of live media interviews.

The scope and detail of the above may change depending on the context of the event and will be considered during either the MDOTCs or PCTCs, where agreement of the ESV, AEMO, and the Department will be sought on whether a single industry spokesperson should be invoked.

The single industry spokesperson is also expected to participate in relevant stand-up media briefings, which during major emergencies often include the Premier, relevant Minister and the Emergency Management Commissioner.