

VICTORIAN GAS EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose and scope

To provide a communications process to promote the sharing of information between the gas industry, government agencies and AEMO in anticipation of, and in the response and recovery to, a gas emergency.

The Victorian Gas Emergency Communications Protocol (Protocol) supports the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) in the conduct of its responsibilities as a support agency for a disruption to an essential service (Class 2).

1.2. Definitions and interpretation

1.2.1. Glossary

Terms defined in the National Gas Law (NGL) and the National Gas Rules (NGR) have the same meanings in this Protocol unless otherwise specified in this clause.

The words, phrases and abbreviations in the table below have the meanings set out opposite them when used in this Protocol.

Table 1. Glossary

| Term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Business-as-usual (BAU) | The safe and secure operating state of the gas network. |
| Class 1 Emergency | a) a major fire; or b) any other major emergency for which the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, the Country Fire Authority or the Victoria State Emergency Service Authority is the control (Emergency Management Act 2013 Section 3). |
| Class 2 Emergency | A major disruption to an essential service, including (but not limited to): electricity, gas and liquid fuel. |
| Control | The organisation with the primary responsibility for responding / coordinating a threat. |
| Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) | The control agency with primary responsibility for Class 2 emergencies involving a disruption to the essential services of electricity, gas and liquid fuels (specifically - domestic gas supply). |
| Gas Emergency | For the purpose of the Protocol, is an actual or imminent threat to the safe and reliable supply of gas in Victoria, including threat to public safety. |
| Gas Network | The interconnected assets that support the supply of natural gas to the Victorian community. |
| Situational Awareness | Awareness of what is happening in the operating environment, in order to understand how information, events and actions will impact objectives, both immediately and in the near future (from Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub). |
| Threat | A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause all, or part of, the gas network to operate outside of BAU conditions. Threats may be natural, anthropogenic or socionatural in origin. (adapted from Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub). |

2. TRIGGERS FOR NOTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

Table 2 provides a list of notification and assessment triggers to assist in determining the appropriate information sharing action as defined in Section 3.2 of this Protocol.

Communication may also commence on the occurrence of a material increase of risk to BAU conditions (associated with a threat), but which has not been pre-identified within the triggers (Table 2).

Table 2. Triggers for Notification and Assessment

| Preparedness Trigger* | Actual Trigger |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AEMO issuing of a notice of a threat to system security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Loss of a key facility/asset – Supply shortfall – Operating conditions outside of BAU which materially changes the risk profile of the system • AEMO issuing the automatically generated Demand & Supply Likelihood Chart¹ • A response (preparedness or actual) by a Class 1 Control Agency (e.g. severe weather, bushfire) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – associated with gas, or – may have an impact on gas infrastructure, or – may have an impact on system operations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged loss of significant asset from the supply chain • Potential or actual supply shortfall requiring demand restraint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – AEMO led curtailment – Govt. led restraint (voluntary or mandatory) • Loss of supply to end users requiring activation, or likely activation, of the Single Industry Spokesperson Protocol • High profile public safety event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – numerous fatality or injuries associated with a gas event • National security event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cyber – Terrorism relating to gas infrastructure |

*A single threat does not necessitate the activation of the arrangements within this protocol.

Stakeholders may request activation of the protocol by contacting the AEMO Emergency Duty Manager 24 hour number.

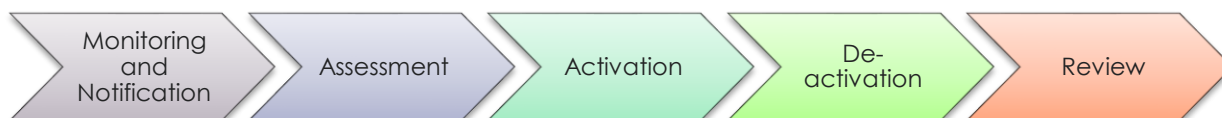
¹ Advice to the market that total gas demand will exceed a pre-established trigger for a specific gas day.

3. COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

The Protocol supports the timely gathering and analysis of information through the preparedness, response and recovery phases of an emergency.

There are five identified phases to the Protocol highlighted by Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Communications Process



3.1. Monitoring & Notification

Gas stakeholders monitor the performance of assets and systems as a matter of business as usual.

Where a gas stakeholder has identified a threat aligning to the defined triggers in Table 2 (or a material increase of risk), that stakeholder should contact the AEMO Emergency Duty Manager.

Note: the notification and assessment triggers do not imply an “emergency” but recognises the requirement for AEMO, industry, and government stakeholders to monitor a threat more closely.

In assessing action under section 3.2, AEMO’s Emergency Duty Manager (EDM) will consult internally and with the affected business(es). The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) will be notified of the outcome of the assessment.

Notification of arrangements under this Protocol is in accordance with section 3.3.

Where the risk profile changes during the monitoring of a threat(s) (implicit or implied), AEMO’s EDM will re-assess the requirement for action after further consultation with affected business and government stakeholders. DELWP and stakeholders will be notified of the outcome.

The Protocol provides a platform to share information between gas stakeholders during emergencies and should not replace, but instead complement, pre-existing relationships.

3.2. Assessment

When the AEMO EDM becomes aware of a threat that is likely to eventuate into a gas emergency, an assessment will be made against the pre-determined triggers (see Table 2). The outcome of this assessment will result in one of the following actions:

- (a) A threat is identified which meets a predefined preparedness trigger, but there is no increased risk to the gas network operating securely:
 - (i) AEMO continues to monitor the situation.
 - (ii) Government and industry continue to monitor the situation.
- (b) A threat is identified which does not meet the predefined preparedness trigger, but there is an increased risk to the secure operations of the gas network:
 - (i) AEMO may initiate a teleconference to brief the relevant gas stakeholders, without the activation of the Protocol.

- (c) A threat(s) is identified which meet the predefined preparedness trigger, that may eventuate into a gas emergency or has a significant amount of public interest:
 - (i) The Protocol is activated, but a preparatory teleconference is convened.
 - (ii) Where required, AEMO may undertake an abridged preparatory teleconference with a core group of stakeholders aligned to operational goals. The core group of stakeholders are determined based on the event and will always include the affected businesses and relevant government agencies.
- (d) One or more of the triggers are met as a result of an incident or an identified threat which has eventuated into a gas emergency:
 - (i) The Protocol is activated.
 - (ii) A full Protocol teleconference is convened.

Preparatory Teleconference

A teleconference used to brief on increasing risk and preparedness activities of the market, including government, in response to a threat(s).

Based on the intent of the teleconference, not all stakeholders may be requested to attend.

AEMO will conduct the teleconference in accordance with section 3.3.

Full Protocol Teleconference

A teleconference used to share information on stakeholder actions undertaken in response to an emergency.

AEMO will conduct the teleconference in accordance with section 3.3.

Industry Teleconference

On occasion, AEMO may be required to brief a certain subset of gas stakeholders to convey risk relevant to their position in the supply chain. These teleconferences relate to the operating the gas system and are conducted outside of this Protocol.

Note: outcomes of industry teleconference may be raised as part of a teleconference under this Protocol.

3.3. Activation

The communications arrangements within this Protocol are activated by the AEMO EDM.

The following actions are undertaken by the AEMO EDM in relation to emergency communications:

- a) Scheduling and facilitating teleconferences when the Protocol is activated.
- b) Issuing a Situation Report(s) following teleconferences, or as required.

3.3.1. Scheduling of teleconferences

AEMO EDM will send out an electronic correspondence advising of the intent to conduct a teleconference. The correspondence will have:

- o Name of event.
- o Reason for teleconference.
- o Date and time of teleconference.

- Dial in details.

3.3.2. Teleconference conduct

Common Objective: To provide situational awareness on the risk and actions undertaken (actual or anticipated) within the gas system to better inform an organisations' response.

The following outlines the conduct of the teleconference:

- Roll-call: AEMO's EDM (Chair) will conduct a role call by organisational name. Confirmation of attendance is all that is required.
- Statement of Intent: The EDM will advise of the intent of the teleconference to support the common objective, including identifying the "control" arrangements
- Agenda: AEMO will follow the agenda set out in Appendix B. Where applicable, AEMO may deviate from the agenda for meeting efficiency.
- Report by exception: the primary rule is do not speak unless pertinent to the objective of the meeting or item being discussed.
- Minutes: AEMO will document teleconferences and circulate a Situation Report on conclusion of a Preparatory or Full teleconference in accordance with 3.3.3.

3.3.3. Situation Report (Minutes)

Minutes will be circulated in the form of a situation report on conclusion of the teleconference using the template in Appendix A. Only high-level details and actions arising from the teleconference will be captured.

The Situation Report will also be used to share information outside of the teleconference.

3.3.4. Teleconference frequency

At the conclusion of each teleconference the Chair (AEMO EDM) will provide an indication of when the next teleconference will occur. Frequency will be aligned to the severity of the event and participant demand.

3.3.5. Technology

AEMO will use Microsoft Teams to contact the teleconference, with back-up provided via dial in.

3.3.6. Dual fuel events

Where a dual energy event occurs in Victoria, the Gas Duty Manager liaises with the VIC Responsible Officer.² If required, a joint teleconference between the gas and the electricity sector may be called by AEMO (in accordance with the Victorian Electricity Emergency Communications Protocol (VEECP)).³

3.3.7. Multi-jurisdictional activations

When a gas event impacts or may impact on multiple jurisdictions, AEMO's operational response is managed in collaboration with the National Gas Emergency Response Advisory Committee's Interruption to Supply Process.

In this situation the Protocol operates in support of the Victorian response. AEMO and DELWP provide the conduit between the Victorian jurisdiction and the national processes.

² Responsible Office under the National Energy Market – Memorandum of Understanding on the Use of Emergency Powers

³ <https://www.aemo.com.au/Electricity/National-Electricity-Market-NEM/Emergency-Management/Victorian-role>

3.4. De-activation

Deactivation of the Protocol is considered when a majority of affected industry participants return to business as usual (BAU) operations. The AEMO EDM will formally notify all stakeholders of the deactivation of the Protocol.

At the last teleconference, and prior to formal notification of deactivation, participants will agree to:

- (a) Any ongoing communications prior to business-as-usual (BAU) being declared.
- (b) Report on any residual risk or threats to their operations that may require re-activation of this Protocol.
- (c) Prepare for any subsequent inquiries or investigations.

3.5. Review

Following deactivation of the Protocol and when industry has resumed BAU operations, a review of the event is to be considered and where possible, conducted within 2 weeks.

Stakeholders involved in the activation of the Protocol are invited to participate in any review. Submissions and any recommendations from the review are reported at the GEMCF committee meetings for discussion.

The review should consider:

- (a) Justification for activating (or not activating) the Protocol based on the event.
- (b) Adequacy of the triggers.
- (c) The adequacy of the processes in the Protocol.
- (d) Stakeholder feedback.
- (e) Improvement initiatives.

Activations undertaken as a preparedness activity do not require review.

4. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MEDIA

Nothing within this Protocol precludes a market participant from communicating impacts of an event in accordance with their own commercial obligations.

Teleconferences convened under this Protocol may seek advice from participants on messaging in and out of their organisation as a form of situational awareness. In particular, where a high-profile event is occurring.

Participants can bring communications representatives to the teleconference.

Where a coordinated media campaign is required, due to either the declaration of an emergency or on agreement between AEMO and the distribution businesses, the Single Industry Spokesperson Protocol will be activated.

Under the Single Industry Spokesperson Protocol, AEMO coordinates the development of key messages in collaboration of the gas distribution industry and government, and where appropriate manages state-wide media.

Teleconference's under this Protocol may assist the Single Industry Spokesperson Protocol process.

5. CONTACTS

All Registered participants are eligible to attend the teleconferences.

Contact details of Registered participants are sourced from the Market Information Bulletin Board under emergency contacts (Report int134). Changes can be made via AEMO's website ([contact us – enquiry form](#)).

It is the responsibility of the registered participant to ensure that contact details remain up-to-date.

Government agencies will be invited to teleconferences specific to the operational goal (intent). These agencies are (but not limited to) the following:

- DELWP.
- Emergency Management Victoria.
- Energy Safety Victoria.
- Victorian Police.
- Department of Health (DH)
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
-
- Commonwealth Agencies.
- Other (as advised by the Control Agency).

APPENDIX A. TELECONFERENCE AGENDA

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

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Report by exception only</i> | | Responsible |
| Control Arrangements: | | EDM & DELWP |
| Teleconference Statement of Intent: | | EDM |
| Situation Report: | | |
| Update of current situation: | What Occurred: When Occurred: Impact on Operations: Actions Undertaken: Estimated Return to Service: External Communications: | Affected Asset Operator |
| System: | Impact on Operations: | AEMO* |
| Transmission: | Impact on Operations: | APA/Jemena* |
| Distribution: | Impact on Operations: Public Safety Risks: Number of Customers Off Supply: Estimated Return to Service: | Distribution Businesses* |
| Customer Management: | | *if not the affected asset operator |
| Retailers: | Reported/noted community consequences: Impact on Operations: Actions Undertaken: Communications: | Retailers |
| All: | Points of interest media & socials: | All |
| Consequence Management: | | |
| Public Safety: | Reported/noted community consequences: Impact on Operations: Actions Undertaken: Communications: | ESV, EMV, Emergency Services & Health Services |
| Essential Service Disruption: | Actions Undertaken: Outcomes of Other Meetings: Control Agency Considerations: Communications | DELWP |
| Risks Presenting in Short/Long Term | | |
| Short/Long Term Risk Profile: | Supply: System: Public Safety: | Chair / All |
| Next meeting: | | Chair |

APPENDIX B. SITUATION REPORT

Event Name:

Date: Sitrep No.

Description of event:

Current Situation:

Summary of actions to date:
AEMO:

Distribution:

Retail:

Government:

Other information:

Actions:

Next Teleconference: