



Exercise Disconnect and Reconnect

Summary of 20 October 2025 Exercise

November 2025

On 20 October 2025, Ministers, officials and telecommunications companies met in Canberra for a simulated outage exercise to strengthen emergency response to outages impacting calls to Triple Zero by identifying gaps, testing coordination, assessing alternatives, addressing impacts on vulnerable groups, and considering restoration barriers.

The exercise followed a significant outage to the Optus network on 18 September 2025, which impacted the carriage of calls to Triple Zero.

The **Minister for Communications, The Hon Anika Wells MP, and the Minister for Emergency Management, The Hon Kristy McBain MP**, reiterated the need for cooperation, collaboration and rapid communication in preparing for and responding to crises, including timely and accurate notifications for governments, communities and emergency services.

It was agreed these exercises will be held regularly to continue to identify issues and strengthen the response of the Triple Zero ecosystem. This demonstrates the continued commitment of all sectors to public safety.

The ACMA reminded the telecommunications representatives of their existing obligations to ensure calls to Triple Zero were always carried, and foreshadowed new obligations coming in to force on 1 November 2025. The ACMA advised that while it will provide guidance and advice to assist telecommunications companies to comply with their obligations, there would be zero tolerance of any instances of non-compliance in the future.

Representatives of the **Triple Zero Custodian** advised that a key function of the Custodian was to ensure that all parts of the Triple Zero ecosystem were connected and coordinated at all times, but particularly in times of crisis. Timely sharing of accurate information amongst all participants is critical to the effective operation of the ecosystem.

Telecommunications providers shared information on the processes and systems they each have in place to prevent and respond to network outages, including regular testing prior to any major changes to network configuration. They also outlined the steps each telco followed to communicate and respond when issues occurred.

Telstra, in its role as **the Emergency Call Person** (the Triple Zero answer point) spoke of the systems in place to monitor traffic into the Triple Zero call centres, which can be used to detect potential network issues. This includes the network dashboard and the 24-hour emergency monitoring and alarm. There was also discussion about making greater use of the Triple Zero Partner communications bridge – a communication protocol enabling any participant in the ecosystem to trigger, and participate in, a facilitated teleconference to discuss and assess any incident impacting the carriage of calls to Triple Zero or to Emergency Service Organisations.

The Exercise

The exercise was held in the National Situation Room (NSR) in Canberra, led by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCSA) and facilitated by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

More than 130 participants from the telco sector, emergency services, Commonwealth and state and territory governments engaged in the exercise to explore and strengthen national preparedness and response to telco outages and direct impacts to the Triple Zero network.

The discussion-based exercise was designed to simulate and explore responses to real world scenarios involving a large-scale technical outage, and telco outages caused by the loss of mains power and other physical infrastructure damage during extreme weather and bushfire hazards in the Higher Risk Weather Season.

Agreed actions and next steps

Participants agreed to work collaboratively to deliver the following ecosystem improvements, with the **Triple Zero Custodian** to write to all participants on the outcomes agreed below, and monitor their delivery.

1. Outage notification processes to be reviewed and improved by –
 - **Telecommunications Providers** ensuring timely provision of critical information to the appropriate parties.
 - **The ACMA** providing guidance to industry on the required content and standardised format of the notification.
 - **The Custodian** leading work to develop a real time data platform.
2. **All parties** to review internal processes to ensure -
 - Availability of key personnel 24/7.
 - Diversity of contact mechanisms for critical staff to be implemented as soon as possible (dual sim phones etc).
 - Share contact information for key personnel.
3. **The ACMA, in conjunction with the Custodian** to establish stronger oversight of network upgrades, significant configuration changes and transitions through:
 - Implementing requirements for network testing processes.
 - Requiring key performance indicators for network performance, with a focus on time taken to restore service in the event of an outage or interruption.
4. With contributions from **all parties, the Triple Zero Custodian** facilitate messaging for a public awareness campaign explaining why outages occur, the likely duration of most outages and advice to consumers on how they can mitigate the impacts of network outages on their daily lives.
5. **Telecommunications Providers** to enter into mutual assistance arrangements with each other to drive greater cooperation during network outages and during major weather events. These obligations should also extend to **Emergency Service Organisations**.
6. **The Custodian** will establish a regular cadence of exercise activities. In conjunction with NEMA, the Custodian, will publish an exercise schedule at the commencement of each calendar year.