



BLACKSTART EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

APRIL 2010

VERSION 1.0



1 INTRODUCTION TO BLACKSTART EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN (BECP)

The objective of the Blackstart Emergency Communications Plan (BECP) is to set out the appropriate stakeholder communication procedures to be followed by key power industry stakeholders in the event of a total electricity system blackout.

A problem of this nature is perhaps the ultimate crisis that can befall a utility and it is proposed that if appropriate parties are fully familiar with, and trained in, implementing the procedures necessary following such an occurrence, then this will also assist in dealing with partial blackouts should these occur.

This document outlines a framework of action to manage the sharing of information with key stakeholders during a power system emergency. The foundation of the plan is to underline to external parties that the system is currently being restored to its pre-incident state in accordance with agreed and well practiced guidelines.

The purpose of the BECP is to:

- i. Create an alerting and reporting communication procedure for key stakeholders in the event of system blackouts
- ii. Establish a framework to coordinate communication flow between EirGrid, industry, government, other regulatory agencies, media and the public

1.1 Key Stakeholders

With respect to the Blackstart Emergency Communications Plan, the following describes the key stakeholders involved in responding to an electricity system blackout.

- *National Control Center, NCC:* Following a widespread power outage, EirGrid's NCC will manage the operational restoration of the electricity system to its normal configuration.
- *Manager, Power System Control:* Will coordinate the operational response to the emergency from the NCC. Will provide recurring updates to the EirGrid Operations Director on the system restoration
- *Blackstart Emergency Communications Team, BECT:* Internal EirGrid team, led by the EirGrid Operations Director, charged with external communication and key stakeholder management for duration of the incident.
- *Electricity Crisis Communications Team, ECCT:* This group will be comprised of key personnel from the DCENR, CER, Bord Gáis Networks / Gaslink¹, ESB Networks and EirGrid. The EirGrid Operations Director will update these parties with the latest information on the system restoration via regular conference calls.
- *Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, DCENR:* Will facilitate the linkage between key players in the electricity emergency and national emergency responses. Will lead the National Emergency Response Committee (NERC). Will participate in the ECCT.

¹ The NGEM (National Gas Emergency Manager) will be the Bord Gáis Networks / Gaslink representative on the ECCT.



- *Commission for Energy Regulation, CER:* Will monitor compliance with regulatory obligations and monitor response against previously agreed processes. Will participate in the ECCT.
- *ESB Networks:* Will work with the NCC to restore electricity system to normal configuration. Will participate in the ECCT.
- *Gaslink / Bord Gáis Networks:* The NGEM (National Gas Emergency Manager) will work with NCC to restore electricity system to normal configuration. Will participate in the ECCT.



2 BECP IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Overview

EirGrid's BECP is broken down into a number of component stages to ensure information will be shared with key stakeholders in a timely manner following the issuing of a Blue Alert² and the corresponding activation of the BECP.

- **Stage 1** describes the critical first contact by EirGrid with key internal and external stakeholders
- **Stage 2** describes the initial, and subsequently recurring EirGrid internal Blackstart Emergency Communications Team (BECT) meetings
- **Stage 3** describes the formation, membership and meeting agenda of the Electricity Crisis Communication Team (ECCT)
- **Stage 4** describes the relationship between the ECCT and the National Emergency Response Committee (NERC)
- **Stage 5** describes how the national media response will be managed

Subsequent sections provide a more detailed explanation of these individual stages.

² A Blue Alert will be issued from the NCC in the event of a widespread power outage

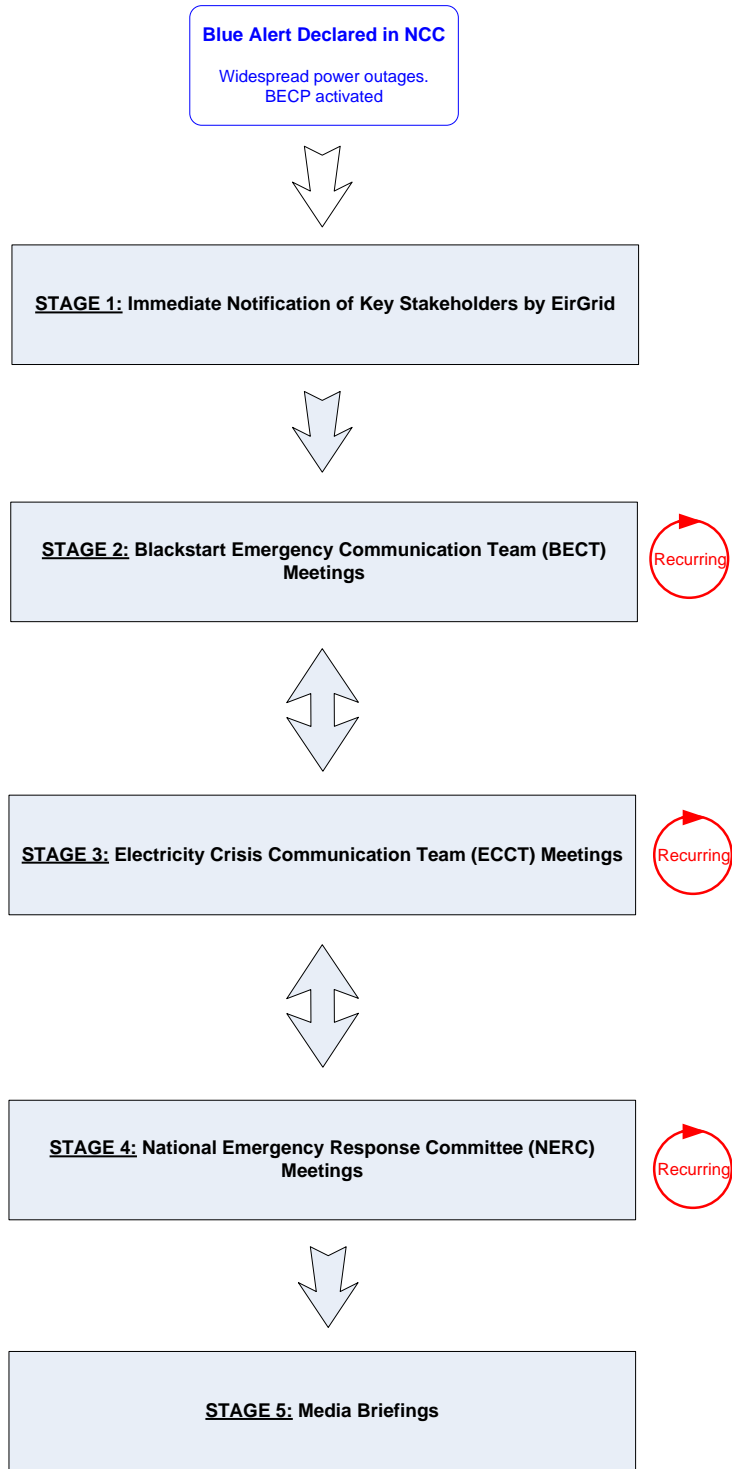


Figure 2-1 Overview of activation and implementation of BECP

Note:

- The flowchart assumes that the NERC will coordinate the national media response.



- Stages 1 to 5, and especially who manages the national media response, may need to be adapted depending on cause and duration of electricity crisis.

2.2 Stage 1 – Immediate Notification of Key Stakeholders

Following the issue of a Blue Alert in the NCC an internal communication process is initiated whereby key EirGrid staff are notified of the event. This, in turn, will activate stage 1 of the BECP.

Stage 1 involves EirGrid making the critical first contact with key internal and external stakeholders to give them an initial briefing on the incident. This briefing will form part of the strategic communication response from EirGrid and is separate from any operational communications from the NCC.

It should be noted that past experience of dealing with power outages has indicated that this initial first contact will be a mixture of (a) EirGrid personnel contacting key stakeholders and (b) these key stakeholders contacting various personnel in EirGrid directly for information.

During stage 1 details of the cause, extent and likely duration of the power outage may not be fully known so any statements will concentrate on the fact that EirGrid is aware of the incident and will restore electricity supplies to normal as quickly as possible.

2.3 Stage 2 – Blackstart Emergency Communication Team (BECT) Meetings

Stage 2 of the BECP will begin once all contactable key stakeholders have been issued with an initial briefing on the nature of the incident and all members of EirGrid’s BECT have assembled in the companies offices.

The BECT is an EirGrid internal team comprised of the Operations Director, Communications Manager and Customer Relations Manager and it is charged with managing communications and stakeholder relationships during a system blackout.

The basis of any communications from the BECT will be the regular update from Manager PSC to the Operations Director on the progress of the system restoration.

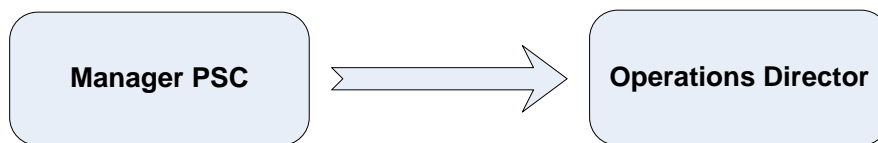


Figure 2-2 EirGrid internal communications between Manager PSC and Operations Director

2.4 Stage 3 – Hourly Conference Call with Key Stakeholders

The purpose of this conference call is to update key stakeholders with the latest information on the situation.

The nature of this call, and the corresponding stakeholders involved, is dependent on the type of emergency. For an electricity emergency refer to section 2.4.1 and for a joint electricity and gas emergency refer to section 2.4.2.

2.4.1 Electricity Emergency

The Operations Director will chair a conference call with a group known as the **Electricity Crisis Communications Team, (ECCT)**. This group will be comprised of key personnel from the DCENR, CER, Bord Gáis Networks / Gaslink³, ESB Networks and EirGrid.

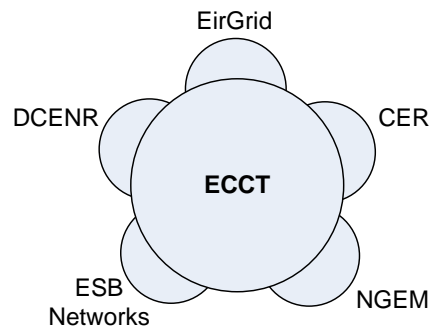


Figure 2-3 Electricity Crisis Communications Team (ECCT)

As stated previously, the purpose of this conference call will be to update the above parties with the latest information on the situation – it will not form part of the operational response which will be solely directed from the NCC.

2.4.2 Joint Electricity and Gas Emergency

The EirGrid Operations Director and the Bord Gáis National Gas Emergency Manager (NGEM) will jointly chair a conference call with a group known as the **Joint Energy Crisis Communications Team, (JECCT)**. This group will be comprised of key personnel from the DCENR, CER, BG Networks, Gaslink, ESB Networks and EirGrid.

³ The NGEM (National Gas Emergency Manager) will be the Bord Gáis Networks / Gaslink representative on the ECCT.

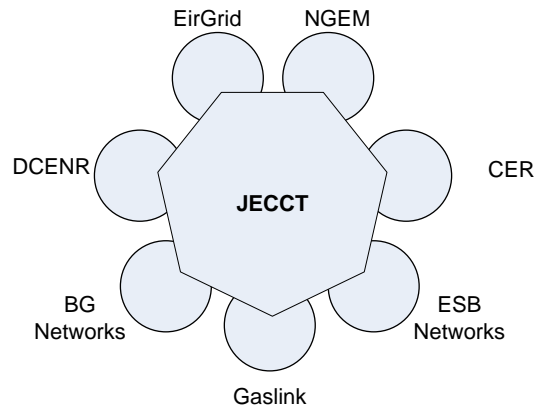


Figure 2-4 Joint Electricity Crisis Communications Team (JECCT)

From an EirGrid perspective, the purpose of the conference call will be to update the above parties with the latest information on the power system restoration – it will not form part of the electricity operational response which will be solely directed from the NCC.

From a Bord Gáis perspective, the JECCT will carry out the same role as the GERT (Gas Emergency Response Team as described in the Gaslink Natural Gas Emergency Plan). Refer to the following link for more details:

<http://www.bordgais.ie/networks/ngep>

2.5 Stage 4 – National Emergency Response Committee (NERC) Meetings

The chair of the ECCT / JECCT (and other members as required) will report the latest update on the situation to the NERC. Any further details on the workings of the NERC are beyond the scope of this document – however the industry is committed to actively participating and lending its resources to the committee as necessary.

Note: The NERC is likely to be established for major energy emergencies only.

2.6 Stage 5 – Media Briefings

Depending on the nature and duration of the emergency, the media response will be handled in one of the following manners:

1. The Irish Government's National Emergency Response Committee (NERC) manages the national media response
 In the event of the media centre being established in the National Emergency Coordination Centre, (NECC), industry stakeholders will actively participate in and lend their resources to the media response by providing updates on the electricity restoration, cooperating with key stakeholder press offices and also assisting in the operation of the media centre.
2. EirGrid and ESB Coordinate the National Media Response



EirGrid & ESB Communications will manage the overall media response and will also closely cooperate with key stakeholders, and their corresponding press offices, to ensure a common and uniform message.

3. EirGrid, ESB and Bord Gáis Coordinate the National Media Response
In the event of a joint electricity and gas emergency, EirGrid, ESB and Bord Gáis will manage the overall media response and will also closely cooperate with key stakeholders, and their corresponding press offices, to ensure a common and uniform message.

2.7 Stand Down

Stand Down – When the emergency has been resolved the EirGrid Operations Director will inform all relevant parties. Depending on the nature of the emergency, and the risk of reoccurrence, all parties should remain available to reconvene if required.

APPENDIX – ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition	Brief Explanation
BECP	Blackstart Emergency Communications Plan	This plan
BECT	Blackstart Emergency Communications Team	EirGrid team responsible for implementing the BECP
CER	Commission for Energy Regulation	Independent body responsible for overseeing Ireland's energy sector
DCENR	Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources	Government department responsible for Ireland's energy sector
ECCT	Electricity Crisis Communications Team	Composed of representatives from key stakeholders in Ireland's energy industry – convened for an electricity emergency
GERT	Gas Emergency Response Team	Composed of representatives from key stakeholders in Ireland's energy industry – convened for a gas emergency
JECCT	Joint Energy Crisis Communications Team	Composed of representatives from key stakeholders in Ireland's energy industry – convened for a joint electricity and gas emergency
NCC	National Control Centre	EirGrid control centre from which Ireland's electricity system is normally operated
NECC	National Emergency Coordination Centre	Centre for coordinating a strategic response to a major emergency
NERC	National Emergency Response Committee	Committee which coordinates actions by different government departments in a national crisis. Meetings are held in NECC.
NGEM	National Gas Emergency Manager	Defined role in Gaslink Natural Gas Emergency Plan
PSC	Power System Control	Part of the Operations Department within EirGrid