



TELEPHONY OUTAGES

COMMUNITY LEVEL

PLANNING WORKSHOP

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF WORKSHOP

AIM

To prepare your community for responding to a loss of telecommunications

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the risk;
- Evaluate the threat to your community;
- Create a community level action plan.



THE HAZARD

- By 2027 all telephones, both business and residential, will be replaced with Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) systems.
 - ❑ [BT Digital Voice](#) is an example
- These are dependent on a broadband connection, which is dependent on electrical power

THE RISK

The National Risk Register recognises the risk of failure within the national system

[Failure of the National Electricity Transmission System \(NETS\)](#)
[\(cabinetoffice.gov.uk\)](#)

and at a regional level

[Regional failure of the electricity network \(cabinetoffice.gov.uk\)](#)

- The latter can also be caused by extreme weather causing intermittent outages.
- Emergency Services, including Cornwall Council, are only able to respond once they are aware of a situation.

PREPAREDNESS

- There will be vulnerable persons in your community who are telecommunications dependent for medical aids, alarms.
- They should already have a back-up battery for their VOIP phone. If not, and where you are aware of it, encourage them to speak to their supplier.
- Do you know if you have medical professionals in your community or a [community first responder](#) who will be able to assist in a medical emergency?
- How good is the mobile signal in your community? [View mobile availability - Ofcom Checker](#)
- Do you know if your local mobile mast has a back-up battery or generator?
- Do you promote preparedness in your community already? [Prepare – Prepare](#)

SCENARIO (Boscastle Case Study)

- Without any warning an underground power cable has failed
- The ensuing bang can be heard throughout the community and thick acrid smoke can be seen in the air
- Homes and businesses have suddenly lost power
- VOIP phones without back-up power are redundant
- Mobile phones are redundant as the local mast is dependent on the same power line and does not have a back-up battery or generator
- You are now effectively cut-off and cannot make calls to the emergency services or National Power to alert them of the fire and resultant crisis

“This incident highlights the profound risk we face with the transition to VOIP. Especially in rural areas. Without power or adequate backup systems, we are left vulnerable, unable to call for help in the midst of emergencies.”

ACTIONS

Either as a group or syndicate tables:

- Evaluate how the above scenario would impact your community
- What is your immediate plan? (See the [next slide](#) for planning)
- Where will you meet as responders? Community or village hall? Someone's home? (Remember to have a printed copy of your plan, but do not have any personal details in it for the purposes of GDPR)
- Is there a central point where the community can go to that has back-up power (community hub)?
- How will you communicate this to your community now, and in the event of invoking a plan?
- How and where will you respond if the scenario occurred due to a storm or flood? (*It is advised for a community response to stand down volunteers who are out and about in the community. This does not exclude you from running a response, but it must be from a place of safety.*)

YOUR COMMUNITY LEVEL PLAN

Capture:

- What businesses or residential addresses have access to a VOIP phone with a battery back-up or generator.
- Vulnerable persons who want to share their personal information with you.
- Alternatives means of communication. Are there people or businesses in your community with;
 - An amateur radio network handset or base station ([RAYNET-UK | Main Website - Home page](#))
 - A satellite phone or [Starlink](#) set
- Where your nearest [fire station](#) or [police station](#) is to alert them to the issue, or;
- Who will drive out of the community to a pre-determined mobile hot-spot to get help?

[BACK TO ACTIONS SLIDE](#)

NEXT STEPS

- Communicate the plan to your community
- Review the information periodically
- Test your plan and equipment in the community
- Evaluate the outcome (of tests) and make the necessary changes