


JOURNEY MAP STATE EMERGENCY SERVICES (SES) - ILLUSTRATIVE SCENARIO (Hypothetical)

The following scenario is hypothetical only and is meant to reflect the typical issues faced by any Emergency Services or State Emergency Service (SES) agency responding to a major storm or flood in any jurisdiction across Australia. The actual practices, devices, role titles and department names used by the relevant agency in each jurisdiction in a similar situation may vary.

Tornado in coastal town

At 2 am, a tornado hit a regional coastal town, causing damage to 100+ houses; the storm has also taken out the local telecommunications infrastructure and power is out. The fire station is inaccessible due to fallen trees. There are also fallen trees down and landslides on the roads in and out of town – making access challenging.



"I have never been so scared in my whole life, I was terrified. It was like an explosion when the roof fell off and the walls fell down."

Team resident

SETTING THE SCENE

0 HOURS



The priority was to get an idea of the scope required. So, we had to go back to basics or the scene, all our own gathered by eye and paper or verbal accounts observed in person.

As the picture from the scene emerges from eyewitness reports, the scale and complexity of the incident becomes more apparent. SES and other PSA teams have to attend to multiple resources across towns, getting Comms up and fully functioning is critical.

On-scene command liaises with SES Central Command to request urgent support.

1.5 HOURS



At the scene, there are dangerous conditions with gas leaks and power lines down. Multiple PSA teams on the ground have identified critical resources and making the scene safe for residents. Temporary Broadcast assets arrive and an set-up providing immediate relief.

"The team on the ground are focused on critical resources and power lines down. Multiple PSA teams on the ground have identified critical resources and making the scene safe for residents. Temporary Broadcast assets arrive and an set-up providing immediate relief."

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8 HOURS



The life-threatening rescues are complete. However, assistance has been detected in some areas. Access to these areas is now restricted and requires everyone to sign in and out.

Power and public MHO networks are partially restored in some areas which bring with it an influx of calls from the public and a new wave of call-calls to respond to. Responder support arrives on scene by the town is cleared. A long-term temporary solution for access to mobile networks is needed to support the usage of PSA and public use MHO networks are newly completed.

"The team is exhausted but relieved to be getting a more comprehensive idea of the extent of the damage on the ground. Now the area is safe, the focus goes on operational communications, participation in putting in place sustainable infrastructure that can provide multiplexing communications over the coming days."

"Up until now there has been no public communication channels, with the MHO partially restored there is a new wave of calls for assistance and also increased numbers of PSA."

5 DAYS

As infrastructure is restored and the event moves into the recovery phase, SES switches from being the lead Comms Agency to providing support for the main Recovery Agency. Power and local MHO networks are now fully restored. The number of First Responders at the site is reduced right back to the team begin to execute a demobilisation plan. Temporary Broadcast assets are packed-up for transport back to their storage locations.

"As much as possible, we try to get observations and what when they occur."



PRESSURE LEVELS ON THE TEAM



Event Details

Event type: Severe event
Duration: 6 days
Urgency of need: Critical ASAP
Locations: 100+ homes damaged
Geography: Mostly suburbs with some semi-rural
Environment: Debris, strong winds, rain, dark, hazard, landslide
Access: First Responder access only

Coverage Issues

Temporary coverage required: No coverage (some MHO Sites destroyed, Others impacted by power outage)
Agencies: SES is lead combat agency, all other agencies (Police, Ambulance, Urban and Rural Fire Services are also in attendance)
Connections required: Peak - 150+ (all agencies)

WHAT OPERATIONAL COMMS ARE DOING (and Internal tech terms)

DIAGNOSTICS

Assess all the information to determine the factors that will shape the response.

The on-site Emergency Communications Manager is responsible for ensuring that all the information gathered is used to make decisions. This includes:

- 1. Gather information from all sources
- 2. Prioritise information based on severity
- 3. Communicate with other agencies
- 4. Monitor and adjust resources as needed
- 5. Provide ongoing coverage assessment
- 6. Report on the status of MHO coverage and equipment as required to SES
- 7. As an other information available
- 8. Make a detailed report (MHO) once the incident progresses to ensure to be used

SOLUTIONING

Review diagnostics to formulate an initial response.

- 1. Review the status of the incident
- 2. Identify any gaps in coverage
- 3. Check that there are no available resources
- 4. Share the status with the Incident Commander
- 5. Update the status of MHO coverage as required

The Incident Commander will then:

- 1. Authorise and coordinate resources
- 2. Provide ongoing coverage assessment
- 3. Report on the status of MHO coverage and equipment as required to SES
- 4. As an other information available
- 5. Make a detailed report (MHO) once the incident progresses to ensure to be used

SETTING TO EVENT

Gather assets and team to the site.

Once the problem is present in the scene, the Incident Commander will:

- 1. Gather and lead the response
- 2. Coordinate resources across the scene
- 3. Provide ongoing coverage assessment
- 4. Report on the status of MHO coverage and equipment as required to SES
- 5. As an other information available
- 6. Make a detailed report (MHO) once the incident progresses to ensure to be used

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INITIAL SETUP

Set up and activate solution.

The Incident Commander will:

- 1. Set up the solution
- 2. Activate the solution
- 3. Provide ongoing coverage assessment
- 4. Report on the status of MHO coverage and equipment as required to SES
- 5. As an other information available
- 6. Make a detailed report (MHO) once the incident progresses to ensure to be used

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VALIDATE AND INTEGRATE INITIAL SOLUTION

Once the Temporary Coverage team has been set up, the Incident Commander will:

- 1. Validate the solution
- 2. Integrate the solution
- 3. Provide ongoing coverage assessment
- 4. Report on the status of MHO coverage and equipment as required to SES
- 5. As an other information available
- 6. Make a detailed report (MHO) once the incident progresses to ensure to be used

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MAINTAIN

Keep equipment up and running.

The Incident Commander will:

- 1. Maintain the solution
- 2. Monitor the solution
- 3. Provide ongoing coverage assessment
- 4. Report on the status of MHO coverage and equipment as required to SES
- 5. As an other information available
- 6. Make a detailed report (MHO) once the incident progresses to ensure to be used

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REVIEW AND ADJUST

Monitor conditions and optimise the solution as needed.

The Incident Commander will:

- 1. Review the solution
- 2. Adjust the solution
- 3. Provide ongoing coverage assessment
- 4. Report on the status of MHO coverage and equipment as required to SES
- 5. As an other information available
- 6. Make a detailed report (MHO) once the incident progresses to ensure to be used

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CONTINUAL INTEGRATION WITH ONSITE RESOURCES

Align with the team in charge of the operation.

The Incident Commander will:

- 1. Integrate with onsite resources
- 2. Coordinate resources
- 3. Provide ongoing coverage assessment
- 4. Report on the status of MHO coverage and equipment as required to SES
- 5. As an other information available
- 6. Make a detailed report (MHO) once the incident progresses to ensure to be used

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SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

Resource of Agencies: Data is lack of

- 1. Multiple agency, not standard location
- 2. Limited resources, limited equipment
- 3. Limited resources, limited equipment
- 4. Limited resources, limited equipment

Temporary Coverage Assets: Limited availability for use

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JOURNEY MAP

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICES (SES) - ILLUSTRATIVE SCENARIO (Hypothetical)

The following scenario is hypothetical only and is meant to reflect the typical issues faced by any Emergency Services or State Emergency Service ("SES") agency responding to a major storm or flood in any jurisdiction across Australia. The actual practices, devices, role titles and department names used by the relevant agency in each jurisdiction in a similar situation may vary.

Tornado in coastal town

At 2 am, a tornado hit a regional coastal town, causing damage to 100+ houses; the storm has also taken out the local telecommunications infrastructure and power is out. The fire station is inaccessible due to fallen trees. There are also fallen trees down and landslides on the roads in and out of town – making access challenging.



"I have never been so scared in my whole life, I was terrified. It was like an explosion when the roof blew off and the walls fell down."

Town resident

Event Details

Event type: Severe event
 Duration: 6 days
 Urgency of need: Critical ANSP
 Civilians: 100+ homes damaged
 Location: Regional coastal
 Geography: Mostly suburban with some semi-rural
 Environment: Debris, strong winds, rain, dark, hazmat, landslides
 Access: First Responder access only

Coverage Issues

Temporary Coverage required: No coverage (some MNO Sites destroyed. Others impacted by power outage)
 Agencies: SES is lead combat agency, all other agencies (Police, Ambulance, Urban and Rural Fire Services are also in attendance)
 Connections required: Peak - 150+ (all agencies)

Acronyms

BAU: Business as usual
 CoW: Cell on Wheels
 LMR: Land Mobile Radio
 MNO: Mobile Network Operator
 OC: Operational Communications
 PSMB: Public Safety Mobile Broadband
 SES: State Emergency Services

Disclaimer for Illustrative Photos: Photos used are for illustrative purposes only and are sourced from online newspaper articles. Credits are on the images.

SETTING THE SCENE

0 HOURS



SES alerted by Police that there is significant local damage in a regional coastal town as a result of a mini Tornado.

At the scene there is devastation, and the local crew from SES are on the ground within five minutes. They gather intel as best they can about the extent of the damage. It is dark, raining and the general public are panicked about what is happening.

The central command for the Tornado is set up at the local SES base. They link back with SES Central Command via LMR (which is still functioning).

"Our priority was to get an idea of the scale reserved. So, we had to go back to basics; at the scene, all intel was gathered by pen and paper or verbal accounts shared in person."

As the picture from the scene emerges from eyewitness reports, the scale and complexity of the incident become more apparent. SES and other PSA teams have to attend to multiple rescues across town. Getting Comms up and fully functional is critical.

On-scene command liaises with SES Central Command to request urgent support.

1.5 HOURS



At the scene, there are dangerous conditions with gas leaks and power lines down. Multiple PSA teams on the ground have prioritised critical rescues and making the town safe for residents. Temporary Broadband assets arrive and are set up - providing immediate relief.

"When we need communications, we need them urgently. And it needs to be a turn-key response. Always ready to go - so that the teams can jump in the vehicles and get to where they are needed as soon as possible."

"The team on the ground are focused on critical rescues and under high pressure, you don't want them having to change behaviour or think about how to they have to connect their comms. It just needs work."

PRESSURE LEVELS ON THE TEAM

High Pressure

FRUSTRATED

With comms limited or non-existent, everything takes longer to do as a team or agency

Low pressure

FOCUSSED

There's multiple critical rescues to be done - no stopping (urgent and progressed a critical)

STRETCHED

There's no more coverage available

WHAT OPERATIONAL COMMS ARE DOING (and internal tech teams)

DIAGNOSTICS
 Assess all the information to determine the factors that will shape the response.

The on-duty Operational Communications Planner or equivalent role ("Op Comms Duty Officer") at SES is advised that there has been a report of a major event. This then:

1. Gather available intel to better understand the problem. This might include:
 - a. Details of the type of incident, environment and other requirements
 - b. Written or verbal accounts shared in person by people who have visited the location, including photos from phones or tablets
 - c. Any other geo-mapping assessment (Google maps)
 - d. Try to find out the scale of the MNO outage or degraded service (instance via reports from teams on the ground)
 - e. Any other information available
2. Build a situation report (SITREP) which outlines the problems or issues to be solved

SOLUTIONING
 Review diagnostics to formulate an initial response.

Once the key problems to be solved have been identified, the Op Comms Duty Officer will:

1. Develop an initial plan - to outline what temporary coverage assets are needed at the site (for approval)
2. Check that these assets are available
3. Share the plan with the teams on the ground (via LMR)

GETTING TO EVENT
 Gather assets and team to the site.

Once approval to proceed is received, the Op Comms Duty Officer will:

1. Contact and brief the responsible Deployment Team about which Temporary Coverage assets are required along with any information they have about the location for setup etc.
2. Locate people who can set up the equipment at the event
3. The Deployment Team will then:
 - a. Locate and access the assets needed
 - b. Transport those assets and the people required to set up the assets to the event.

INITIAL SETUP
 Set up and activate solution.

The Deployment team onsite will

1. Determine safe access and location for the assets on multiple locations:
 - a. Find power source (if needed e.g. generator)
 - b. Ensure the location is secure
 - c. Set up the Temporary Coverage Assets (this might be a CoW or a Portable Tower)
 - d. Set up any additional Coverage Extension required (e.g. Mesh networks, repeaters, Directional Antennas)
 - e. Turn on assets and validate that they are working

VALIDATE AND INTEGRATE INITIAL SOLUTION

Once the Temporary Coverage assets have been set up, the Deployment team informs the Op Comms Duty Officer of what has been set up and how in-field teams can connect to it if the connection is successful.

The Op Comms Duty Officer then liaises with the local Incident Commander and works with them on integrating these solutions into the Incident Action plan.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES

Accuracy of diagnostics due to lack of information

With no ability to send detailed intel from on the scene to central command, the onsite team can see the devastation but cannot fully communicate it. There is only so much that can be communicated verbally.

Many of the public are unable to call for help (due to no MNO coverage and power outages), so it's hard to get reports from the scene and build a picture of the depth and breadth of the problems.

This means that the Operational Comms team need to rely on existing maps and location data which do not reflect changes to devise a response.

Identifying available temporary coverage assets

There is significant time pressure to devise a plan and identify which assets are available to transport to the scene (needs to be instant).

Availability of temporary coverage assets

- Temporary Coverage Assets could already be in use at other locations - for example if other towns have also been hit by the storm and need assistance.
- Assets could be offline for maintenance.

Verifiability and variety of asset options
 The unknown scale of requirements means that the Operational Comms Team need to plan for a variety of scenarios.

Storage locations

Distance of the temporary coverage asset cache from the event may reduce the speed with which assets can get to the event.

Transport methods
 If access to the town is blocked - partially or fully - by debris on roads - then this needs to be cleared. There may be also be restrictions on who can enter the area if there are power lines down or other potential dangers.

Challenges setting up the assets

Low visibility (2 am), heavy rain and strong winds make it hard to find the set up location.

Safety of operator (PSA access only)
 The area is PSA access only plus damaged buildings, burst gas mains and asbestos debris.

Locating in-field teams
 Teams on the ground are moving around the town, so the location of required coverage is changing.

Durability (against environment)
 There is adverse weather, high winds and rough terrain, the asset must stand up to these.

Network coverage (range)

The incident site stretches across a small town meaning the Temporary Coverage Assets need to be setup in multiple sites.

Ease to connect for end users
 This is a high pressure environment the PSAs are focused on critical rescues, connecting needs to be seamless and consistent each time. Ideally if connection is not directly via SIM card, it is via pre-installed SSIDs and Passwords.

Integration across multiple PSAs
 Multiple PSAs require coverage.

8 HOURS

5 DAYS

POST-INCIDENT ACTIVITIES



The life-threatening rescues are complete. However, asbestos has been detected in some areas. Access to those areas is now restricted and requires everyone to sign in and out.

Power and public MNO networks are partially restored in some areas which brings with it an influx of calls from the public and a new wave of call-outs to respond to. Broader support arrives as access to the town is cleared. A longer-term temporary solution for access to mobile networks is needed to support this surge in PSA and public use as MNO networks are heavily congested.

"The team is exhausted but relieved to be getting a more comprehensive idea of the extent of the damage on the ground. Now the area is safe, the focus from an operational communications perspective is putting in place sustainable infrastructure that can provide multiagency communications over the coming days."

"Up until now there has been no public communication channels up, with the MNO partially restored there is a new wave of calls for assistance and also increased numbers of PSAs."

As infrastructure is restored and the event moves into the recovery phase, SES switch from being the lead Combat Agency to providing support for the main Recovery Agency. Power and local MNO services are now fully restored. The number of First Responders at the site is wound right back - so the team begin to execute a demobilisation plan. Temporary Broadband assets are packed up for transport back to their storage locations.



"As much as possible, we try to get observations as and when they occur."

FAIGTUED

It's been a long week!

MAINTAIN

Keep equipment up and running

Once in place the Temporary Coverage Assets may be left on their own, whilst the Deployment Officer may decide to adjust the set up. It may be necessary to address other issues to support the response effort.

The performance of the Temporary Coverage assets is monitored remotely - and any issues that can't be resolved remotely are sent to the In-Field Deployment team to deal with.

Some of the key things that need to be done in the field are:

- Ensuring that power is maintained to the assets:
 - Check and replace batteries
 - Re-ful generators
 - Finding additional power supplies if needed
- Ensuring the asset is safe and secure from environmental factors or looters.

REVIEW AND ADJUST

Monitor conditions and optimise the solution as needed.

The Deployment Team and Ops Command Duty Officer may decide to adjust the set up. It may be necessary to address other issues to support the response effort.

- More equipment is needed** - this can happen if the scale of the incident increases.
- The type of equipment required needs to be reviewed** - to meet the changing nature of the incident and the challenges this brings
- The deployment model needs to change** - because of the changing needs of the incident - for example, there will likely be increased congestion over time.
- Onsite equipment can be optimised** - to deliver better service to in-field teams by lightning things up.
- The solution needs to be scaled to support multi-agency communications** - through additional assets and/or a change in overall asset mix.

CONTINUOUS INTEGRATION WITH ONSITE NEEDS

Align with the team in charge of the operation.

The Ops Command Duty Officer will:

- Continue contacting with the onsite teams to ensure the solutions in place meet their needs and notify them of any changes to what is deployed.
- Keep liaising with the Incident Management Team to stay ahead of any changes needed.

DEMobilISE

Pack up assets and transport them from the site.

The Ops Command Duty Officer/Deployment team receive advice that the incident is over via onsite command or central command.

They then start to put their demobilisation plans into effect:

- Transition the comms from the combat agency assets to the recovery agency.
- Pack temporary coverage assets up, which includes, breaking the gear down and getting it ready to transport.
- Transport the assets back to storage locations.

OFFLINE MAINTENANCE

Ensure equipment is ready for the next deployment.

Make sure the equipment is maintained between use and that it is back where it should be (in the right location).

This includes things such as cleaning, through check-overs, servicing and refuelling.

INCIDENT REVIEW

Debrief and identify opportunities to improve.

Incident Review - events have an incident review involving debrief and lessons learned documentation.

Power supply duration

Lack of local power supply puts heavy reliance on temporary power solutions like generators and batteries.

Potential Health Hazards

Asbestos Hazmat makes staying with the asset 24/7 a risk to human health and needs to be carefully managed.

There is also a risk of falling trees or gas explosions in the area that could pose a risk to assets and/or even to human life.

Capability for extended coverage and scalability

- The initial solution needs to be readily scalable to be able to ramp up for increasing needs for coverage from 150+ First Responders in the area.

Interoperability (across PSAs)

Multiple PSAs requiring communications to be shared (integrated).

Ease to pack up

Once the incident is over - fatigued in-field teams want to be able to get home quickly. It's important to reduce the complexity and time to pack the temporary coverage assets up.

Transportation

Transportation is needed to ensure quick and easy demobilisation.

Ease of maintenance / servicing

The temporary coverage assets have been exposed to harsh conditions and bump-pod around for a week, so they need a thorough check.

Speed of returning to operational readiness

It is critical that Temporary Coverage Assets are quickly returned to a state of operational readiness once they have been returned to their storage location - so that they are ready to go when they are next needed.

Optimisation

Continual improvement is always important. And each incident allows the opportunity to review what happened, to look for ways to do things even better next time!