

# Building disaster resilience through Emergency Telecommunications

15 and 16 December 2020  
0900-1200 EST/1500-1800 CET

<http://itu.int/go/Building-Disaster-Resilience>



## Event Overview

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United States Telecommunication Training Institute (USTTI) jointly hosted a 2-day webinar on 15 and 16 December titled **Building Disaster Resilience through Emergency Telecommunications**. The overall objective of this online webinar was to highlight the role of emergency telecommunications for disaster risk reduction and management, and discuss best practices for increasing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resilience and capacity for saving lives and limiting the impact of natural and manmade hazards.

Building on the USTTI Emergency Telecommunications training sequence and ITU's extensive experience in the area of emergency telecommunications, ITU and USTTI arranged a targeted set of presentations from ITU, subject matter experts, government regulators, and industry partners for a public audience. Sessions on day one focused on ITU's global guidelines for the development of National Emergency Telecommunication Plans, and standards and best practices, including the implementation of the Common

Alerting Protocol. Sessions on day two included a regulatory perspective from the U.S. Federal Communications Commission, and an examination of emergency management from both mobile and satellite operators. A panel discussion also analysed the importance of network capacity and resilient infrastructure in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The webinar was well received by more than 100 participants on both days, retaining its large attendance until the very end. Information on this event, including speaker biographies, presentations, and a full webcast archive can be found on the event's website at <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Emergency-Telecommunications/Pages/Building-Disaster-Resilience-through-Emergency-Telecommunications-in-2020.aspx>

## Summary of Presentations

### ➤ Opening Remarks:

Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director, ITU BDT provided opening remarks that focused on Emergency Telecommunications changes, including COVID-19, that demonstrate the requirement for increased connectivity, and opportunities for emergency telecommunications. With over 3.7 billion people unconnected, many in disaster-prone areas, the need for increased partnerships and priority on expanded access to ICTs has never been higher.

Mr. Jim O'Connor, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, USTTI provided welcome remarks that summed up USTTI's continued commitment to international training, USTTI's coursework for disaster communications, and stakeholder evolution based on recent events and technology. Mr O'Connor highlighted that this webinar was another example of the strong ITU and USTTI relationship.

### ➤ ITU Guidelines for Emergency Telecommunications

Ms. Maritza Delgado, from the ITU BDT Emergency Telecommunications Division, provided a high-level overview of applicable ITU Guidelines, to include development and implementation of National Emergency Telecommunication Plans, scenario-based Tabletop Exercises that test national ability to respond to disasters, and the importance of the Tampere Convention to rapidly organize international responses to disasters.

## **Summary of Presentations (continued)**

### **➤ Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) and Cellular Broadcast:**

Mr. Eliot Christian, an internationally recognized CAP expert, provided an overview of CAP to include opportunities and challenges for alerting populations of vital information, identification of alerting authorities, the benefits of CAP, features of a CAP message, an examination of CAP-enabled alerting hubs, identification of which countries have implemented CAP, and real world use-case examples. Mr. Christian also presented an overview of the benefits of Cellular Broadcast for public warning.

### **➤ Regulatory Perspective on Emergency Preparedness and Response:**

Mr. David Furth, U.S. Federal Communications Commission's Deputy Bureau Chief for Public Safety and Homeland Security, provided a presentation on U.S. emergency communications, critical infrastructure, government and industry partners, and the impact of disasters on communications. Mr. Furth detailed the FCC's emergency response role in disaster preparedness and mitigation, communications tracking systems and frameworks, and provided several case studies that illustrated the impact of natural disasters along with the U.S. multi-sector approach to response and recovery.

### **➤ AT&T Disaster Recovery – Lessons Learned:**

Mr. Robert Desiato, Director of AT&T Technology Operations, provided a briefing on AT&T's emergency management posture, with emphasis on planning and preparation, monitoring during an event, and damage assessment and restoration. AT&T works with public and private sector partners to restore communications to its customers as quickly as possible, as well as to provide communications for disaster response efforts. Network disaster recovery capabilities include specially designed recovery equipment, trained personnel, and continuous evaluation and process improvement. Mr. Desiato detailed several recent case studies that showcased real-world network disaster recovery scenarios.

### **➤ Satellite Services: Communications for Disasters and Emergency Response:**

Ms. Donna Bethea-Murphy, Inmarsat Senior Vice President for Global Regulatory Affairs provided a presentation on the role of satellite communications in disaster management and risk reduction, including an overview of satellite capabilities and applicability to emergency communications by orbit type and frequency band, satellite

uses for monitoring systems, and applications for satellite communications in disaster response. Additionally, Mr. Steven Tomkins, Director of Inmarsat Regulatory Affairs provided case studies that exemplified these capabilities in action.

### **➤ Round-table Discussion on COVID-19 and resilient networks: How to ensure business continuity in the telecom industry:**

Moderated by Ms. Sofie Maddens, Head of ITU BDT's Regulatory and Market Environment Division, the expert panel included Ms. Irene Kaggwa Sewankambo, Executive Director, Uganda Communications Commission; Ms. Aarti Holla-Maini, Secretary General, EMEA Satellite Operators Association; and Mr. Tim Hatt, Head of Research, GSMA Intelligence.

Topics included:

How can businesses help shape connectivity in the long term response to the COVID crisis/national emergencies? How can we get a better understanding of the status of resilient infrastructure and the needs of connectivity within countries and how can the different stakeholders contribute to better monitoring? What have we learned about cooperation among stakeholders between the public and private sector in times of crisis? What are some examples and lessons learned from operators and regulators working together?

All panel members concurred that a key lesson learned from 2020 is that everyone needs connectivity, and every partner and solution counts. ICTs are not just about the technology and connectivity, they underpin all aspects of social, education, and economic interaction and must be affordable, available, and sustainable. All of us have to define the new normal after COVID. Our response needs to be fit for purpose - it is more vital now than ever to connect the 3.7 billion people who are not able to access communications technology. Women and at-risk populations in particular are falling further behind without access to ICTs, which has been accelerated by changes during the COVID response. We need more infrastructure investment and we need to consider whether it is resilient to disasters and usage changes, like we have seen in 2020. Stakeholders from the satellite and mobile industry, and regulators all have vital roles to play in increasing access to ICTs, with synergies linking their efforts.

All sessions of the webinar were recorded and can be viewed at:

<https://www.itu.int/webcast/archive/d2020USTTI>