

Tonga: Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai Volcano

Global ETC Teleconference #20

Date: 15/02/2023 Time: 08:00 UTC

All information related to the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) operations can be found on the website: www.etcluster.org/emergency/tonga-volcanic-eruptionsunami

For more information or to be added or deleted from the mailing list please contact:

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Attendance

Chair	Caroline Teyssier	UAE
Government of Luxembourg NORCAP WFP	Roland Nurenburg Godefroy Asiamuah John Dovale Komi Amedjonekou Oscar Caleman Claire Roach Aramais Alojants	Luxembourg Tonga Fiji Rome Thailand UAE UAE

Agenda

1. General Situation update
2. ETC Tonga update
3. AOB

Minutes

1. General situation update

- The ETC has received estimates from several stakeholders on the expected restoration date of the domestic portion of the submarine fibre optic cable linking the remote islands to the Tongan mainland.
- Based on a meeting with the Chief Technical Officer of the Tonga Cavbles Limited (TCL), the organisation responsible for the repair work, the restoration is expected to be completed by the end of March or early April 2023.

- Other estimates have put the expected restoration date as late as the end of April 2023.
- There have been reports that the mobile service has been restored on the Vava'u and Ha'apai islands but is not yet stable.
- ITU has begun a data collection campaign through the Disaster Connectivity Map (DCM) for the Turkiye-Syria earthquake. The ETC will follow up to confirm whether the Tonga campaign is still active.

2. ETC Tonga update

Radio communications

- An HF radio communications training was facilitated by the ETC team, Barrett Communications, and two WFP Pacific Multi-Country Office (MCO) counterparts on 23 January. Eight Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change, and Communication (MEIDECC) personnel from the Departments of Communication, Meteorology, Coastal Radio Watch Network, and the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) were trained on the operation, programming, and maintenance of Barret Communications HF radios.
- Following the training, MEIDECC has been conducting fortnightly testing of the HF network as recommended. The latest test was successfully conducted on 15 February from Tonga to Fiji and from Tonga to Australia.
- As a part of the testing, stretch challenges have been conducted in which radio contact was made as far as New York state, Iceland, and Cuba, demonstrating that the HF system installed in the MEIDECC communications centre in Nuku'alofa, Tongatapu office is fully functional.
- The NORCAP standby partner is preparing equipment for shipment to the five additional locations in the remote islands where the HF system will be deployed. The ETC is looking into the possibility of covering the cost of moving the equipment from the NEMO warehouse in Nuku'alofa to the installation locations if necessary.
- A Telecommunications Specialist from WFP's Fast IT & Telecommunications Emergencies & Support Team (FITTEST) will join the team in Tonga from 21 February to 4 April to support with the deployment of the HF system in addition to any other required activities related to the emergency.lu VSATs on Vava'u and Ha'apai islands.
- The ETC is waiting to receive one consignment of VHF equipment which is expected to arrive in Tonga between 20 and 28 February. If the equipment is not cleared through customs before the end of the FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist's mission, MEIDECC will need to deploy the VHF equipment on their own. MEIDECC has the frequency plan and has given assurance that they are capable of deploying the system with some remote support for the configuration of the system.

Data connectivity

- The NORCAP standby partner travelled to Vava'u to troubleshoot issues with the VSAT that was providing connectivity to the MEIDECC Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) on

the island. The emergency.lu VSAT in Ha'apai also experienced issues however the connection has been stable since 26 January.

- As the usage of the VSAT connectivity is higher at the Vava'u EOC, the ETC will propose to MEIDECC the dismantling of the Ha'apai VSAT in order to transfer the terminal to replace the non-functional one in Vava'u. Emergency.lu will check with SES whether the location of the antenna can be updated to swap the VSAT terminals.
- Ahead of the planned completion of the cluster's other activities and the expected restoration of the domestic fibre-optic cable connection at the end of March, the ETC will begin to plan with emergency.lu for the demobilisation of the two emergency.lu VSATs.
- The Global ETC will liaise with the Government of Luxembourg on the management of the decommissioned VSATs. It remains to be decided whether they will remain prepositioned in the region, or return to Dubai or Luxembourg for refurbishment.
- Emergency.lu will also confirm whether the VSAT service can be extended by a week if necessary depending on the date of the undersea cable restoration.

Coordination

- The ETC is working on collecting data to populate the ICT Capacity Assessment (ICA) template for Tonga.
- The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) requested that the ETC share a draft of the ICA to assist them with the National Emergency Telecommunications Plan (NETP) they are developing with the Tongan Government. An ITU consultant is expected to travel to Tonga for a mission to support with the NETP.
- The NORCAP Standby partner will attend MEIDECC's national ETC meeting, which includes stakeholders from the fire department and military, on 16 February. This will be the first such meeting attended by the ETC.
- The cluster will plan to conduct a lessons learned exercise upon the closure of the emergency operation.

3. AOB

- N/A

The next teleconference meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 March 2023.

Acronyms

DCM	Disaster Connectivity Map
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
HF	High Frequency
ITU	International Telecommunication Union

MEIDECC	Tonga Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change, and Communication
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NEMO	National Emergency Management Office
TDCE	Tonga Domestic Cable Extension
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WFP	World Food Programme

Minutes: Claire Roach, Global ETC Operational Information Management Officer