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SECMP0029 ‘Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Testing Amendments’

1st Working Group

27th February 2017 11:00 – 13:00

Gemserv, 8 Fenchurch Place, London, EC3M 4AJ

Meeting Headlines

Attendees:

Organisation	Working Group Member
Utilita Energy (Proposer)	Andy Knowles
SSE	Emslie Law
Eon	Tim Newton
Landis + Gyr	Elias Hanna
British Gas	Rochelle Harrison
EDF Energy	Paul Saker

Representing	Other participants
SECAS	Brendan Murphy (Chair)
	Selin Ergiden (SECAS Modification Support)
	Sam Browne (SECAS Modification Support)
	Urszula Thorpe (Technical Support)
DCC	Gordon Riddell
	John Matthews
	Robin Healey

Modification Proposal overview

The Proposer provided an overview of SECMP0029, highlighting the issues associated with loss of service during Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery testing. The modification seeks to ensure that disruption to Services is kept to a minimum such that Service Requests (SRs) received during BCDR testing are processed as soon as possible to reduce adverse customer impacts. The Proposer was particularly worried about the delay to processing SR2.2 Top Up Device.

Current arrangements

The Working Group (WG) discussed the BCDR current arrangements:

- The DCC is required to perform BCDR testing on their systems at least once a year.
- The DCC explained Users will be notified in advance, up to 20 days before planned BCDR testing. During BCDR testing, the DCC Gateway Connection and SM WAN gateway will be shut down, preventing Users from sending and receiving any communications from the DCC. Before the system is fully shut down, the DCC will monitor the system for any communications in transit to ensure that any Service Responses and Alerts are delivered to Users. Any Device Alerts received during BCDR testing will be queued. Users will not receive them until the system is up and running. Users, however, will have visibility of when these Device Alerts were sent, as they will all be time stamped.
- BCDR testing is held once a year, and test 3 parts of DCC Systems:
 - 1) Data Service Provider (DSP),
 - 2) Communications Service Provider (CSP), and
 - 3) Smart Metering Key Infrastructure (SMKI).
- The DCC intend to test all Service Provider systems during the first annual test cycle (2017). They have consulted on an approach to testing which results with two outages of four hours each - four hour 'failover' and additional four hour 'failback'. The failover session will allow transfer of functionality to the back-up system, while the failback will transfer functionality from the back-up system to the primary system. The DCC will provide notice of the tests and their impact on Parties at least 20 working days prior to testing.

The DCC is currently proposing to undertake BCDR outages at night – 8 pm on a Friday to 12 am on a Saturday. The outages will be up to two weeks apart and during the intervening period, DCC Services will be provided using the back-up systems. If the transfer between the two systems fails during either outage, the transfer will be revised in order to ensure that services are restored at the end of the outage.

Working Group consideration of the problem

The Proposer's concern is that during BCDR testing, suppliers will not be able to send any Service Requests. As suppliers will not be able to top up meters remotely (using SRV 2.2), during the BCDR testing period a customer may run out of credit and be disconnected.

Since BCDR testing must be undertaken and some disruption to Services will be experienced, it was highlighted that to overcome this problem, suppliers can set the non-disablement calendar on meters during BCDR testing to prevent customers from disconnecting themselves if they run out of credit and are unable to enter a UTRN locally.

The Proposer expressed concern they may lose track of whether a customer has entered a UTRN locally, as during the BCDR testing suppliers will not receive Responses from meters indicating whether credit has been added to the meter. The DCC explained that as with Device Alerts generated during the BCDR testing, the CSP system will cache such Responses, and the supplier will receive them when the DCC System has been restored.

Working Group consideration of the solution

Two solutions were considered by the Proposer and WG Members:

- 1) A requirement on the DCC to give reasonable notice to Users in advance of BCDR testing and to keep the disruption to a minimum (to be defined); and
- 2) A requirement on the DCC to queue SRs during BCDR. This option was discounted as the DCC approach to BCDR testing is to shut down the Gateway Connection which will prevent Users from sending any Service Requests.

A third solution was also considered: one that would involve building a new DSP system. Following discussion, the WG agreed it would be very costly to adopt. This option was discounted on this basis.

Next steps

Section H10.9 of the SEC already places a requirement on the DCC to keep disruption to DCC Services to a minimum during BCDR testing. The Proposer has agreed to consider the extent to which the current SEC drafting would need to change to meet his requirements.

The DCC also noted that once the first annual test cycle (2017) is completed, they intend to raise a modification to codify more of the detail around how future BCDR tests (from 2018 onwards) will be carried out on an enduring basis. There will not be a separate consultation on these arrangements as the modification process is the correct mechanism for discussing changes to the SEC. The modification is likely to include:

- The number of outages permitted each year;

- When the outages may occur;
- The maximum duration of each outage; and
- The notice to be provided to Parties in advance of testing.