Stage 02: Working Group Meeting Summary

SEC0009 'Managing Meters in Prepay Mode Through the DCC in the absence of WAN', SECMP0032 'Prioritising Prepayment Customers in No WAN Situations' and SECMP0038 'Sending Commands via PPMIDs'

Date and location

25/10/2018

Gemserv office, (Elizabeth Room), 8 Fenchurch Place, London, EC3M 4AJ

Summary of SECMP0038 'Sending Commands via PPMIDs' Working Group Meeting

The Working Group agreed for an external risk assessment to be carried out on the solution that proposes an alternative communication route for Commands to be sent from the DCC User to the PPMID, for SECMP0038.

The Working Group requested the risk assessment focus on the following specific areas, and not Wi-Fi-enabled PPMIDs in general:

- Determine what additional risk the proposed solution adds to existing Wi-Fi-enabled PPMIDs.

- Determine the risk associated with the proposed solution, which would require the Communications Hub to accept and forward any GBCS Command from the PPMID to the target device, taking into account the likelihood of denial of service among other potential risks.

- The risk assessment should also note the impact of requiring firmware upgrades on all existing and future Communications Hub to ensure they are

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compliant with the future version of Communication Hubs Technical Specifications, should the modification be progressed and approved.

- Consider the various types of connectivity avenues that could be utilised to pass any GBCS Commands to the PPMID from the DCC User (e.g. Internet/Wi-Fi, USB, NFC) and what the associated risk, and level of risk, would be for each possible avenue.

- How could the communication be deemed secure between the following interfaces, assuming there is a need for responses to be received back by the DCC User, so they know whether a Command has been delivered successfully:

  - The DCC User and the PPMID
  - The PPMID and the Communications Hub
  - The Communications Hub and the target device
  - The PPMID and the DCC User

- Determine the overall impact of bypassing the current DCC method of communication to allow Commands to be sent in scenarios where there is intermittent WAN.

- Acknowledge that there will be scenarios where there will be no-WAN and never-WAN coverage, considering the DCC obligation for WAN coverage is less than 100%, but not to assume this proposed alternative method of communication would be used in these scenarios, only in intermittent WAN scenarios.

- Ascertain whether a reduction in the number of different Command types sent via the PPMID would impact the level of risk involved in implementing this modification.

Additionally, the Working Group questioned how existing PPMIDs would be updated to allow this extra functionality to be added, should the modification be implemented, highlighting that the solution should be interoperable to avoid consumers having two PPMIDs. It was noted that there was no obligation for Suppliers to provide a PPMID, only an IHD. Members noted that the functionality required by the proposed solution leant itself to requiring a new device be created as it was not in the scope of current PPMID specifications. However, it was felt that consideration should be made on whether existing PPMIDs could be updated to allow this extra functionality, to avoid a new device being created.

The Working Group considered alternative methods of sending UTRNs to the PPMID via Wi-Fi/internet which would offer a workaround in scenarios where there is no-WAN enabling the consumer to top-up. This would also not require updates to the CH but all GBCS Commands would still need to be encrypted by DCC. Members agreed this alternative solution would have less impact that the proposed solution as it would not affect the CH and was not currently defined in GBCS, although there could be instances of gas meter battery wastage. The Working Group suggested setting up an issues group to look at the solution further.

Actions

- SECAS to present expected costs and timeframes for a Risk Assessment to the Working Group.

- DCC to provide information on the scale of the problem surrounding no-WAN and intermittent WAN.

Summary of SECMP0032 'Prioritising Prepayment Customers in No WAN Situations' Working Group Meeting

The Working Group heard that the DCC Preliminary Assessment had confirmed the modification would require changes to the contracts with Service Providers, which would incur costs on a large scale.

The solution proposed assumed that in order to achieve WAN coverage in 30-days then a communications tower would need to be built, but it was confirmed there would be planning permission required for this to happen that could not be achieved in the requested 30-day timeframe.

The DCC explained that buddy mode, mesh and Communication Hubs with aerials had all been considered as part of this solution, noting that in order to achieve coverage for a premise with no-WAN then a Supplier would need to fit a bespoke CH in their premise which the premise with no-WAN could mesh off of. The Working Group highlighted that this solution would mean that one Supplier could be reliant on another Supplier installing a mesh CH in their consumers premise to allow another Suppliers customer to have WAN coverage, which would need to be a part of Supplier obligations. In addition to this, should a T3/SKUII CH be required then this could only be ordered and installed by DCC whereas other types of CH's, like the SKUII could be installed by a Supplier. Also, all Suppliers would be reliant on obtaining consumer consent in case an existing WAN-only CH needed to be changed to a mesh CH to enable the mesh communications for a neighbouring premise.

The Working Group heard that the 90-day no-WAN obligation on the DCC was on the DCC providing a suggested solution but not resolving the issue.

Members advised the way forward would be for DCC to work with CSP's, with the CSPs advising in situations of no-WAN for Suppliers to change the CH in a premise within 30-days.

DCC suggested Members to attend the Communications Hub Forum/Operational (SMWAN) Forum to discuss the issue further and progress it further, as it had already been raised previously.

AOB

The DCC explained that the dual-band Communications Hub would be integrated into DCC systems over the weekend of 27 and 28 October and would be rolled out in March 2019.

Actions

- The Proposer agreed to consider the next steps for SECMP0032 following the Working Group and inform SECAS of their decision.

- DCC to invite Working Group Members to the existing Forums to take the SECMP0032 'Prioritising Prepayment Customers in No-WAN Situations' forward.

Summary of IssueSEC0009 'Managing Meters in Prepay Mode Through the DCC in the absence of WAN'

Issue SEC009 was raised as a replacement to SECMP0031 'Adding UTRN Functionality to SMETS'. The Working Group.

It was noted that the issue was raised to find a solution to send Commands where there is permanently no-WAN and to be able to receive responses back. The solution would need to accommodate all of the same Commands that a Hand-Held Terminal was capable of and must always be available to all Users. Should there be impacts on the DCC, then these would need to be assessed and an estimated cost provided.

Members highlighted that the solution should be applicable to all meter types and the solution should avoid requiring a change to meters already installed in premises, existing meter specifications with the solutions focus being on the method of delivering commands to the meters. Additionally, the number of no-WAN and intermittent scenarios could be quite low which might affect the business case for the change. The Working Group acknowledged however that all consumers should be offered a Smart Meter and should be able to benefit from it, but in the most cost-effective manner possible.

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The Working Group agreed on the following wish list for the solution to Issue SEC009:

- Same target response times as DCC

- No new prepayment infrastructure

- Avoid a solution that impacts on bandwidth and to rule out drive by as an option

- Consider option of hardwiring directly into the Communication Hub or NFC

- Consider option of installing T3 aerials onto street furniture.

Actions

- AW to submit CCBRG slides and previous discussions on the topic to SECAS.

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