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MP100 'Service Response Traffic Management'

Modification Report

Version 0.2

6 July 2020



About this document

This document is a draft Modification Report. It currently sets out the background, issue, and progression timetable for this modification, along with any relevant discussions, views and conclusions. This document will be updated as this modification progresses.

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1. Summary

This proposal has been raised by Terry Underwood from Utiligroup.

The Smart Energy Code (SEC) is silent on procedures relating to Service Responses when the Data Communications Company (DCC) Systems have suffered an outage or restriction and are then restored. Service Responses are currently queued while the DCC Systems are restricted and then sent to the Users when DCC Systems come back online. Users' adapter systems will receive all of these Service Response messages at once, irrespective of priority. The SEC does not currently specify how Service Responses should be released after an outage or restriction.

2. Issue

What are the current arrangements?

Service Responses are received by Users after a Service Request is sent by that User. Currently, two Modification Proposals have been raised to assist with traffic management of the DCC Systems: these are [SECMP0062 'Northbound Application Traffic Management - Alert Storm Protection'](#) and [SECMP0067 'Service Request Traffic Management'](#). The current proposals only cover Alerts and Service Requests, where both will be managed if an abundance of either threatens to overload the DCC Systems. Both of these modifications look at traffic management preventing a DCC Systems outage. Another Draft Proposal [DP119 'CH Alert Storm Consolidation'](#) has been raised to help improve traffic management directly at a Communications Hub level before traffic enters the DCC Systems at a Data Service Provider (DSP) level.

What is the issue?

There are currently no proposals offering management when the DCC Systems have suffered an outage or restriction and are then restored. In these scenarios Service Responses will be queued while the DCC Systems are restricted and then be sent to the Users when DCC Systems come back online all at once, irrespective of priority.

The SEC does not currently specify how Service Responses should be released after an outage or restriction. This means User Systems will receive all messages at once and the priority messages will have to wait to undergo processing rather than being treated as priority. Changing the SEC so that the DCC has a clear and transparent means of providing prioritisation and traffic management for Service Responses can help.

The likely affected areas of the SEC will include:

- SEC Appendix AD 'DCC User Interface Specification' (DUIS);
- SEC Section H 'DCC Services'; and
- SEC Section A 'Definitions and Interpretations'.

This will be due to having to explicitly detail where the DCC is providing a means of Service Response prioritisation and/or management in the SEC, and any accompanying terminology that will be created for SEC Section A. Further analysis will be undertaken in the Refinement Process when business requirements are agreed.

What is the impact this is having?

The Proposer has encountered issues with the current process and has presented these to the Operations Group, who has confirmed that other User Systems have experienced the same issues. In particular, adapter systems in general being required to process an abnormal volume of queued traffic (e.g. Service Responses and Alerts) once released by the DCC. They have requested that there should be an element of control to the release of all outbound DCC traffic. In the absence of a planned coordination or outbound traffic management, responses are sent at once, irrespective of importance. This kind of activity means that important messages cannot be prioritised for processing, causing potential end-consumer impact by delays to time-critical processes.

The Proposer suggests that where there has been a necessity to look into inbound traffic management to protect the DCC Systems from an outage, investigations should take place into outbound traffic management when the DCC Systems are restored or have an abnormal volume of traffic. This way, it can provide an element of control over outbound traffic, ensuring that time-critical messages can be prioritised. Messages such as Install & Commission and Prepayment could therefore be prioritised over messages such as Alerts, the latter being throttled and placed at the back of a queue.

3. Assessment of the proposal

Observations on the issue

The initial comments received from the Change Sub-Committee (CSC) members was that it was an issue that they felt the industry has at the moment. Their recommendation at the initial meeting was to gather additional input from Panel Sub-Committees and SEC Parties during the Development Stage before returning to seek conversion to a Modification Proposal.

The Technical Architecture and Business Architecture Sub Committee (TABASC) confirmed its interest in this proposal, citing its interest in other traffic management modifications as its rationale. The TABASC had enquired into the existing Service Response strategies and asked whether existing guidance already accounted for this issue. The Proposer stated that although there is some existing guidance for what to do when an outage occurs and how to deal with Service Responses, they expressed that it's a lack of prioritisation for the Service Responses which prompted them to raise the issue. The TABASC therefore asked to be updated on any future developments for the Draft Proposal and be involved in the Refinement Process if converted to a Modification Proposal.

Other Panel Sub-Committees believed they may have an interest, due to the nature of traffic management having impacts on both the Operations Group and the Security Sub-Committee (SSC).

SEC Parties have been asked for additional comments on the issue raised in this proposal, but no comments were submitted. The Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat (SECAS) expects there will be wider engagement from the industry and individual SEC Parties if this proposal is converted to a Modification Proposal. In particular, it will be expecting this input once a Preliminary Assessment has been received from the DCC.

The CSC concluded that the issue was fully understood and that this proposal should proceed as a full Modification Proposal.

Appendix 1: Progression timetable

The recommended approach for this Draft Proposal is for it to be converted to a Modification Proposal and enter the Refinement Process. From there, SECAS will work with the Proposer and the DCC to agree business requirements. After using these to request and receive a Preliminary Assessment, the solution will be discussed at the Working Group and with the interested Panel Sub-Committees to discuss their opinions on the Proposed Solution.

Timetable	
Event/Action	Date
Draft Proposal raised	12 Dec 2019
Presented to CSC for initial comment	2 Jan 2020
Presented to CSC for final comment and recommendations	31 Mar 2020
Panel converts Draft Proposal to Modification Proposal	17 Apr 2020
Preliminary Assessment requested	6 Jul 2020
Preliminary Assessment returned	31 Jul 2020
Modification discussed with Working Group	5 Aug 2020
Update Panel	18 Sep 2020

Appendix 2: Glossary

This table lists all the acronyms used in this document and the full term they are an abbreviation for.

Glossary	
Acronym	Full term
CSC	Change Sub-Committee
DCC	Data Communications Company
DSP	Data Service Provider
DUIS	DCC User Interface Specification
SSC	Security Sub-Committee
SEC	Smart Energy Code
SECAS	Smart Energy Code Administrator and Secretariat
TABASC	Technical Architecture and Business Architecture