



How are citizens' needs being met when a disruption occurs? How prepared are we to handle an emergency both as an employer and as a government service?

How do we better deal with spikes in citizens' calls during a crisis?

Voice over IP (VoIP) changes all this with a fundamental new reality: you can use a IP phone for seamless connectivity wherever you have access to a broadband connection.

MITEL

## VoIP for Government Continuity of Operations Planning – How to prepare. How to respond. How to recover.

It doesn't have to be a huge disaster to cause a problem for government. A fire in a public building or a water main break in another could be disruptive to government's ability to deliver essential public services and support mission essential functions. In such instances, community residents simply want to feel comfortable, know that their local government has the situation under control, receive regular updates on what they need to do, and be assured that they will be all right. Communications plays a critical role in a government's ability to respond to emergencies or attend to unexpected disruptions.

Local government's continuity of operations plans need to account for a myriad of scenarios – public health alerts, inclement weather, natural and man-made disasters.

County and local governments dealing with such events may be forced to relocate their operations for a short or an extended period of time. Government employees may be prevented from reaching the office, forcing these employees to work remotely, potentially for some time, and to become part of the traditional mobile workforce such as first responders, maintenance crews and inspectors. This has created a need to develop flexible and mobile workforce continuity plans in order to ensure the delivery of essential public services.

With traditional telephony, preparing for such situations can be incredibly expensive, time-consuming, and complex. Typical solutions involving extra phone systems and trunk lines to the standard public switched telephone network (PSTN) at a backup site are costly. Lesser scenarios may involve spare systems manually deployed with corresponding delays. Scenarios involving redirecting employee phone numbers to mobile telephones would work, but could lack the level of professionalism that someone calling the government might expect.

A Florida community battered by a record-breaking hurricane season, had begun its emergency planning early. A network of highly resilient Mitel 3300 IP Communications Platforms (ICP) was distributed across key locations. As a result, city emergency crews were able to quickly respond to the calls of more than 100 residents who reached out to a dedicated emergency phone line for help in the worst of times. IP communications played a crucial role in keeping this city's police, fire fighters, and city emergency crews connected, and provided the city with a reliable communications system.

Often in talking about the advantages of using VoIP, the one fact overlooked is how telephony can be utilized for disaster recovery and government business continuity. IP phones and systems can be deployed across the Internet or wide area networks (WANs) enabling rapid recovery, while preserving the security and confidentiality of all phone conversations and information.

Consider the case of a potential Avian influenza pandemic. In this situation, government employees may not be able to come into the office or may even be reluctant to come to the office in order to minimize their exposure. Yet they still need to make and receive calls.

With products like the Mitel® Teleworker Solution, employees can securely use a standard office phone with full-feature parity and standard extension dialing at home by simply plugging it in to their existing broadband Internet connection (DSL, cable, or similar technology). Employees have all the same office phone features and can make and receive regular calls without having to do any remote configuration – the phone simply “calls home”.

Should the main government office fail where the primary PSTN number connects, VoIP allows the government's service provider to re-direct that phone line to another IP-PBX within the company's network. If the government has only a single location, this fail-over could be to the service provider's hosted IP-PBX. And to alleviate security concerns, Mitel's robust industry-standard encryption features ensure confidentiality and security for all VoIP conversations sent over the Internet.

This plug-and-work capability is enhanced with technologies like hot desking, which allows employees to login to a phone with their extension numbers – wherever those phones may be. Employees can have single extension numbers listed in all directories that travel with them. For example, if an employee needs to work at home, he / she can login to their teleworker phone and their office extension now rings there – they will also receive voice mail and all programmed features like speed dials and account codes. Alternatively, if one office is no longer accessible (due to fire, flooding, power outage, etc.) employees can go to another office and simply login to those desktop phones for rapid business continuity.

It is estimated that a worst-case scenario involving an avian flu pandemic sweeping across the United States estimates that a severe avian flu pandemic could last up to 18 months, kill two million, affecting 40 percent of the U.S. or 50 million workers, and severely impact the economy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> White House Report, 2006.

Given the availability and relatively low cost of broadband connectivity, remote sets also allow employees to extend their work day at home. Phones also can be placed on standby for emergency deployments or for extended absences.

In situations where employees cannot make it in to the office or for field workers on the move, products like Mitel's Mobile Extension allow for the "twinning" of a mobile phone to a company extension. Therefore someone calling the main government office can simply dial an employee's extension and it will simultaneously ring on both the employee's office and mobile phones.

The flexibility of VoIP also means you no longer have to dedicate a facility in order to operate a contact center, particularly during disruptions. IP contact centers offer government agencies the ability to quickly and easily set up operations anywhere, creating "virtual call centers" that allow government to leverage part-time or dispersed staff who can work from home using teleworking technology. Moreover, geographically dispersed contact center agents enable staff from different parts of the organization to support the contact center at peak hours of call traffic. A dispersed model provides flexibility in government emergency planning and enables government to continue delivering essential public services.

With VoIP, voice and signaling traffic are simply packets on a data network. This allows voice to flow securely and efficiently across the network – both the private internal network and the public Internet – ensuring rapid continuity of operations in government when facing emergencies. Government authorities then can develop plans that allow them to effectively prepare for any type of emergency, large or small, respond efficiently with reliable and secure communications, and recover with minimal to no service disruption. This is the power of VoIP, a significant advantage for developing any continuity of operation plan, and certainly something worth talking about.

To learn more about Mitel VoIP solutions, contact Mitel Sales at **1 800 648 3579**.



---

**Global Headquarters**

Tel: +1(613) 592-2122  
Fax: +1(613) 592-4784

**U.S.**

Tel: +1(480) 961-9000  
Fax: +1(480) 961-1370

**EMEA**

Tel: +44(0)1291-430000  
Fax: +44(0)1291-430400

**CALA**

Tel: +1(613) 592-2122  
Fax: +1(613) 592-7825

**Asia Pacific**

Tel: +852 2508 9780  
Fax: +852 2508 9232

[www.mitel.com](http://www.mitel.com)

**For more information on our worldwide office locations, visit our website at [www.mitel.com/offices](http://www.mitel.com/offices)**

THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED TO YOU FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. The information furnished in this document, believed by Mitel to be accurate as of the date of its publication, is subject to change without notice. Mitel assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions in this document and shall have no obligation to you as a result of having made this document available to you or based upon the information it contains.

M MITEL (design) is a registered trademark of Mitel Networks Corporation. All other products and services are the registered trademarks of their respective holders.

© Copyright 2009, Mitel Networks Corporation. All Rights Reserved.

GD 851\_3351

