A telecommunications site (e.g., mobile base station or a telephone exchange, provisioning voice and data services), may be offline during bushfire for the following reasons:

- AC mains power has been lost to the site, battery back-up has been depleted and we are not permitted entry into the site and therefore it is not accessible to deploy further power red.
- Where a generator has been deployed, the fuel reserves have depleted and refuelling is not possible due to the location being declared a red zone, into which we are not permitted entry.
- Fire related damage to the network has occurred in a red zone, into which we are not permitted entry. Depending on the extent of the damage to our infrastructure, restoration times may be extensive, or in the event a site has been destroyed, rebuilding is required.
- Furthermore, significantly damaged sites will require a complete structural integrity check to be carried out by specialist engineers to determine that work is safe to be completed and that the infrastructure is structurally sound. If this is the case, once we have been permitted entry to the site, we will assess other options to determine the type of interim connectivity best suited to that site.
- For a mobile base station, this may include the deployment of a temporary telecommunication asset such as a Cell On Wheels (COW), a Satellite Cell On Wheels (SATCOW) and, where this type of asset is appropriate. Other options may include augmentation of the surrounding network to deliver some coverage into the affected area, or for voice and data services where an exchange has been impacted, a Mobile Exchange On Wheels (MEOW) may be a temporary option.

Power redundancy options/generators and temporary telecommunications critical assets are interim solutions and are limited resources which are allocated based on a number of factors, including those listed below.

Given the large scale of the current bushfires and the continually changing and challenging environment, in some instances Telstra has not been able to access sites that are currently not operational, or re-access those sites using generators because it is too dangerous to do so. We work closely with emergency services authorities who determine when access to our sites is permitted and safe to do so. As a result, our communications technicians are among the first to enter disaster affected areas to restore telecommunications services to our customers.

Once sites are safe to access and assess, Telstra prioritises the resources needed to recover the network, whether it be offline due to power or damaged infrastructure.

- Our first priority is to assist the emergency and essential service organisations with their telecommunication requirements. Telstra’s team of Emergency Services Liaison Officers (ESLOs) work with local and state emergency services to support their communications needs, and prioritise the restoration of critical emergency and utility services.
- Further prioritisation of our resources is determined by a number of factors including whether the community is in isolation (that is, may not be able to call Emergency Triple Zero (000), the location of critical priority sites (including location of broadcasting services and emergency services communications networks), scale of the damage and imminent risk of further damage.
- The majority of our efforts are co-ordinated through the State and Territory authorities who manage the availability of resources that may be available to assist us, including through assisting us to access impacted sites.

Telstra has announced a number of measures to support community members and volunteer firefighters during this time. Further information can be found here.

Enquiries regarding Telstra services should be directed to 13 22 03. Any complex customer escalations that require urgent attention should be sent to TelstraEastVic@team.telstra.com and a member of our team will action with priority.