

ICS Outage Report – Sunday 4 December 2011

At 0600 on Sunday 4 December external access and EDI messaging became unavailable. Customs and Border Protection commenced an immediate investigation to determine the cause of the failure.

The CI&SC received an escalation of calls at around 0700 and began to facilitate urgent clearances. Phase 1 of BCP was officially invoked at 0940 and escalated to Phase 2 at 1147.

The cause was identified at around 0810 however to rectify the problem a technician was required on-site at the Customs and Border Protection's Data Centre. The incident was resolved at around 1150 however a large backlog of messages were queued to be processed.

The majority of messages were processed within the next hour and as such notification to industry advising of resolution and ceasing BCP was communicated at 1320.

During the outage, Customs and Border Protection provided support to industry through the agreed BCP arrangements and facilitating urgent cargo clearances through the Customs Information and Support Centre (CI&SC).

Technical Details

A software lockup resulted in the connectivity for all mainframe external users (Cargo and Passengers) failing. These connections are made through three gateway switches designed to act as a primary switch with two backup switches to failover to in the event of a problem. Unfortunately the software failure resulted in the system's inability to recognise the switch error and to defer to the backup switches. This same software failure also resulted in the inability for technicians to remotely access the data centre, necessitating the requirement for actual attendance to the site and subsequent delays ensued.

A post implementation review of the incident will be conducted to identify recommendations for implementation as future permanent corrective action.

Impact

During the incident CI&SC received around 115 extra cargo incoming calls. Additional CI&SC staff were brought in to facilitate the calls and clearance for urgent goods.

During the outage, the BCP was invoked for Export & Imports. CI&SC received 25 requests to process contingency files. 4 file requests were successfully processed, 9 file requests were received with errors or incomplete data and the remaining files were not required to be processed as the incident had been resolved. As the outage did not affect internal users a number of Underbond Movement Requests were input by CI&SC staff on the clients behalf to facilitate the movement of cargo from CTO's.

Communication

Industry was continually notified of the incident through:

- the Cargo Support website (ICS Updates),
- emails through the Cargo Support mailing list