



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
**NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Center, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines

**Memorandum Circular**

No. 11, s.2015

27 APR 2015

TO : All Concerned

SUBJECT : **OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES IN THE CONDUCT OF JOINT  
RAPID EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS TEAM  
(RETT) UNDER THE EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
CLUSTER (ETC)**

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**1.0 Rationale**

In view of the recent disasters in the country, both natural and human-induced, the importance of emergency telecommunications which can be deployed immediately upon the impact of disaster is necessary.

Emergency telecommunications during disaster is an expert field within the wider sphere of emergency communications. Emergency communications covers all technical means and modes for DRRM agencies at all levels of government to perform their routine, daily and response communications. Disaster emergency communications applies to those technical means and modes required to provide and maintain operable and interoperable communication before, during, and after emergencies and disasters. This is accomplished through:

- The provision of an immediate local operable and interoperable voice, data, video, and information systems for Response Clusters;
- The establishment of a functional and usable command and control communications frameworks for the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Incident Command Posts (ICPs) and other identified locations in disaster areas;
- And the fostering of communications interoperability and commonality from national down to barangay emergency response providers.

The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) as stipulated in Section 8 of Republic Act 10121, shall have the primary mission to administer a comprehensive National Civil Defense and DRRM Program by providing leadership in the continuous development of strategic and systematic approaches as well as measures to reduce the vulnerabilities and risks to hazards and manage the consequences of disasters. It has the power and function to establish standard operating procedures on the communications system among provincial, city, municipal, and barangay disaster risk and reduction and management councils, for purposes of warning and alerting them and for gathering information on disaster areas before, during and after disasters.

*Memorandum Circular for the Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Team (RETT)*

In the recent aftermath of natural disasters, we have highlighted the need to develop guidelines that will influence NDRRMC-member agencies, the Response Clusters and humanitarian partners as well as RDRRMCs and local DRRMCs, in establishing and institutionalizing a rapid emergency telecommunications immediately following a disastrous event in the country.

## **2.0 Legal Bases**

This Memorandum Circular (MC) is hereby promulgated based on the following legal provisions:

2.1 Section 9, Powers and Functions of OCD under RA 10121 (Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010)

*Establish standard operating procedures on the communications system among provincial, city, municipal, and barangay disaster risk and reduction and management councils, for purposes of warning and alerting them and for gathering information on disaster areas before, during and after disasters.*

2.2 Section 5, Duties and Responsibilities of the National Council members of Section 5.3 IRR of RA 10121 (Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010)

*Every member agency of the NDRRMC shall establish their respective Emergency Operations Center (EOC), subject to exemption granted by the National Council, and shall likewise designate a focal officer for DRRM.*

2.3 Outcome 12 of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan 2011-2028

*Well established disaster response operations – Availability of timely, accurate and reliable information during response.*

## **3.0 Purpose**

This guideline will serve as the basic framework for strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) during disaster response operations under the leadership of the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC). It is intended to provide assistance at the Regional and Local DRRMC Operations Center for coordination at the national and local level through the Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Team (RETT). The RETT is a rapid deployment team equipped with ICT resources; both human and equipment. It is organized to address the communications, electronics and information needs of the Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) and/or Incident Command Posts (ICPs) in a disaster area for command and control mechanism. In addition, this will serve as basis of decision makers at the national, regional and at the local level whenever there is a need of ICT equipment deployment during emergencies and disasters.

## **4.0 Definition of Terms**

*The following terms are essential for establishing common understanding of terminology used by the guidelines as set out in this document.*



4.1 *Collaboration* – in this document, it is operationally defined as the process of sharing common objectives of two or more groups with corresponding services acting together to generate a collective efforts to attain specific purpose.

4.2 *Communications Interoperability* - in this document, this is operationally defined as “the capability of communications equipment to talk to any similar communications equipment operating in the same electromagnetic spectrum.”

4.3 *Coordination* – is operationally defined as the synchronization of action to achieve mutual goals. It starts with an assumption of dissimilarities.

4.4 *Disaster Response* as defined in the RA 10121, is the provision of emergency services and public assistance during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduces health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected. Disaster response is predominantly focused on immediate and short-term needs and is sometimes called “disaster relief”.

4.5 *Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM)* – the systematic process of using administrative directives, organizations, and operational skills and capacities to implement strategies, policies, and improved coping capacities in order to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster. Prospective disaster risk reduction and management refers to risk reduction and management activities that address and seek to avoid the development of new or increased disaster risks, especially if risk reduction policies are not put in place. The definition is taken from RA 10121, p.7

4.6 *Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)* – as defined in the National Disaster Response Plan for Hydro-Met, it is one of the sub-clusters of the National Response Cluster. The lead agency for the ETC is the Office of Civil Defense (OCD). It will be responsible for coordinating the deployment and implementation of communications services and must fulfill the role of “Provider of Last Resort”. It will be the provider of communications, electronics and information system support services for the identified Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) and/or Incident Command Posts (ICPs).

4.7 *Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HADR)* operations is operationally defined in this document as the actions of state actors and other stakeholders in the generally mitigated actions intended for victims such as typhoons, landslides, flooding, earthquakes, or man-made disasters.

4.8 *Information Communications Technology (ICT)* is defined operationally in this document as the universal term that includes any communications, electronics, and information systems and services.

4.9 *Incident Command System (ICS)* – as defined in the Memo Circular 04, s. 2012, it is a standardized, on-scene, all hazard incident management concepts; allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is non-permanent organization and is activated only in response to disasters and emergencies.

4.10 *Key Players (actors, players, responders, enablers)*. This term is generally used in this paper as an organization, agency, individual, government, private or business that is involved in a HADR with other key players.

4.11 *Operational Protocol* is operationally defined in this document as a procedural process on how to approach operational activities. It is the standard rules that govern all disaster management operators.

4.12 *Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Team* (RETT) is defined operationally as a rapid deployment team equipped with ICT resources; both human and equipment. It is organized to address the communications, electronics and information needs of the Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) and/or Incident Command Posts (ICPs) in a disaster area.

4.13 *State of Calamity* - a condition involving mass casualty and/or major damages to property, disruption of means of livelihoods, roads and normal way of life of people in the affected areas as a result of the occurrence of natural or human-induced hazard.

## **5.0 Concept of Operations**

On orders by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), through the Vice-Chairperson for Response, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster through the Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Teams (RETT) will take the lead in the conduct of installation, operations, and maintenance of ICT systems and equipment to identified Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) and/or Incident Command Posts (ICPs) in disaster affected areas. The RETT is the implementing and supporting arm of the existing Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC).

At the regional levels down to the provinces, municipalities and barangays, the leadership in the conduct of RETT mission shall be determined by the Local DRRMCs as mandated in the RA 10121 based on the Rule 11, Section 1 IRR of RA 10121, "*The LDRRMCs shall take the lead in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the impacts of disasters.*"

RETT operations will be conducted through coordinated operations with other support agencies, local and international volunteers in coordination with the Rapid Deployment Team (RDT) of the NDRRMC. This aims to establish an effective and efficient ICT systems and equipment connectivity from affected areas to national level and vice versa during disaster response operations. It is primarily intended for use by the EOCs, responders and the ICPs.

The RETT will accomplish its mission by employing its national, regional, and local teams from the N/R/P/M/CDRRMC member agencies, volunteer groups and private partners with support from the RDT of the NDRRMC.

Supporting the RETT in ICT operations are the following agencies: DSWD, DILG, DOH, NTC, AFP, PNP, PCG, BFP and such other volunteer groups and agencies as may be called upon by the OCD.

The condition/s that will activate the RETT missions will be the result of the risk assessment provided by the Pre-Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) Core Group. When necessary, its deployment for ICT operations will coincide with the deployment of the Rapid Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (RDANA) Teams to be conducted at the affected areas in coordination with other government agencies. Result of ICT DANA shall be immediately provided to the Response Cluster through the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (Communications, Electronics and Information Systems Division, OCD) to determine what ICT systems and equipment capability are still needed.



Critical in the conduct of RETT operations is the availability of assessment result (PDRA and/or RDANA). Decisive in RETT operations is the immediate identifications of needed resources and location of EOCs and/or ICPs at the disaster affected areas and the availability of transport assets for the deployment of RETT. At the end of these RETT operations, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in disaster response and relief operations is strengthen, effective and efficient.

## **6.0 General Guidelines**

This guideline is designed to address disaster scenarios in the country. Once approved, RETT Handbook will be crafted that will extend and broaden the detailed discussions on its operational coordination.

The following guidance and arrangements will apply for the conduct of RETT missions in disaster affected areas:

6.1 National/Regional/Local DRRM Councils to organize, equip, and train RETT teams.

6.2 This guideline shall not restrict the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), regional and local ICT groups from planning and conducting operations during natural calamities;

6.3 RETT ICT operations shall be conducted jointly by NDRRMC member agencies and/or their regional offices, the affected local government(s), and ICT partners; and

6.4 The OCD, as Lead of the ETC, shall determine the need for additional local and foreign ICT units and provide technical coordination and collaboration for an effective command and control of RDT of the NDRRMC.

## **7.0 Operational Guidelines and Procedures:**

7.1 **Triggers** - Any one of the following conditions triggers a Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Team (RETT) ICT missions as part of a RDT of the NDRRMC or as an independent group under the EOCs and/or ICPs in an affected area(s):

- 7.1.1 Declaration of a National State of Calamity
- 7.1.2 Declaration of a Local State of Calamity which would require the simultaneous deployment of multiple joint Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Teams in the affected areas;
- 7.1.3 Request from RDRRMC Chairperson or any regional member agency;
- 7.1.4 Request, written or verbal, for assistance from the local DRRMC Chairperson/s or any member thereof, to the NDRRMC or through its member agencies;
- 7.1.5 Request, written or verbal, for assistance from any local government official to the NDRRMC or through its member agencies;
- 7.1.6 RDANA Report/s from the Councils at all/any levels;
- 7.1.7 No contact in six (6) hours in areas expected and/or suspected to be severely affected;
- 7.1.8 Devastation as depicted in Pre-Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) and as reported by more than one media reports; and
- 7.1.9 As directed by the NDRRMC Chairperson or the NDRRMC Executive Director.

## **7.2 Categories and Coordination of Actions during Emergency for Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Team (RETT) Missions**

Prepositioning and deployment of National RETT to affected areas shall be implemented and configured based on the Rule 11, Section 1 IRR of RA 10121, The LDRRMCs shall take the lead in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the impacts of disasters based on the following criteria:

- 7.2.1 Level 1: Barangay Development Committee (BDC) local RETT, if a barangay is affected;
- 7.2.2 Level 2: Municipal/City local RETT, if two (2) or more barangays are affected;
- 7.2.3 Level 3: Provincial RETT, if two (2) or more municipalities and/or cities are affected;
- 7.2.4 Level 4: Regional RETT, if two (2) or more provinces are affected;
- 7.2.5 Level 5: National RETT, if two (2) or more regions are affected.

The NDRRMC and intermediary LDRRMCs shall always act as support to LGUs which have the primary responsibility as first disaster responders. Private sector, civil society organizations and other volunteer groups shall work in accordance with the coordination mechanisms and policies set by the NDRRMC and concerned LDRRMCs.

## **7.3 Mobilization and Deployment**

### **7.3.1 Pre-Mobilization**

7.3.1.1 Upon confirmation of any one of the triggers and/or categories, the Lead, ETC calls for an emergency meeting with all concerned member agencies including the RETT to discuss and determine the following:

7.3.1.1.1 Situation – based on initial information on the disaster or event, initial report of damages, local response and projected developments in the emergency situation, including secondary risks.

7.3.1.1.2 Mission Objectives - shall reflect the RETT Terms of Reference (TOR) and include the specific objectives of the mission based on the direction of the Lead, ETC and the estimate of the evolving emergency situation and LGU support requirements. The mission objectives shall indicate the main focus of the mission, the duration, main activities, areas to be covered, and RETT methodology, and form of daily outputs required.

7.3.1.2 The Lead, ETC briefs the Chairperson, National Response Cluster on the results of the emergency meeting and recommends appropriate actions to be taken based on the inter-agency evaluation of the situation.

7.3.1.3 The Lead, ETC through the Team Leader of RETT informs the concerned OCD Regional Office and local DRRMC of the organization, TOR and deployment of the RETT in its operational area and advises the same of the logistical support that needs to be extended to the RETT while on mission within its AOR.



7.3.1.4 The ETC through the RETT in coordination with the concerned Response Clusters and OCD Regional Office(s), shall have the principal responsibility in organizing the conduct of the ICT missions, and in ensuring that all arrangements are in place when RETT are deployed, such as:

7.3.1.4.1 Contact persons and details in areas to be deployed;

7.3.1.4.2 Maps of mission areas;

7.3.1.4.3 Transport arrangements (for missions by land from Manila); and,

7.3.1.4.4 Flight reservations and transport arrangements on ground (for missions requiring air travel and vehicles on the ground).

7.3.1.5 The RETT shall be composed of inter-agency representatives coming from the different Response Clusters represented by national government agency representatives (including regional offices) and as necessary, Cluster partners from the international and foreign groups.

7.3.1.6 All RETT shall have one common briefing from the Lead, ETC or the local counterparts prior to departure which covers, but not limited to, the following:

7.3.1.6.1 Assessment mission and deliverables;

7.3.1.6.2 Duration;

7.3.1.6.3 Key contacts on the ground and at NDRRM OPCEN and mode of communications;

7.3.1.6.4 Reporting and frequency;

7.3.1.6.5 Support to RETT (maps, PPEs, operator, transport, vaccination, personal protective gears, contact details of key personalities on the ground, operational and contingency funds);

7.3.1.6.6 Mission termination and debriefing.

7.3.1.7 The NDRRMC Building located at Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City or any designated ground shall be the marshalling area as well as the staging point of RETT.

7.3.1.8 All costs related to the conduct of these missions for NDRRMC-member agency representatives shall be charged against their respective Quick Response Funds (QRF). Any additional support maybe requested through the OCD's QRF which shall be managed by the Executive Director, NDRRMC through Chief, Financial and Management Division, OCD.

### **7.3.2 Mobilization**

7.3.2.1 Once the RETT are constituted and Team Leaders are designated, the Team Leaders shall develop a Plan of Action (PoA) on how to achieve the mission objectives based on their TORs.

7.3.2.2 Upon arrival in the disaster affected areas, the RETT Team Leader reports to the local DRRMC Chairperson and/or Incident Commander (IC) to discuss the team's TOR, PoA and how best to achieve the team's mission objectives.

7.3.2.3 The CEIS Division shall closely monitor the RETT while on mission and consolidate, analyze and evaluate daily reports submitted for submission to the National Disaster Response Cluster Operations Center (NDRC OpCen).

### **7.3.3 Termination**

7.3.3.1 RETT will coordinate with the Incident Commander and Responsible Officer for proper turnover of responsibilities.

7.3.3.2 Upon mission termination, the ETC through RETT Team Leader in the national level and the Responsible Officer in the local levels may facilitate the conduct of a debriefing at the NDRC OpCen and/or at the EOC respectively.

7.3.3.3 RETT shall submit an After Mission/Debriefing Report to the Lead, ETC through the NDRC highlighting what went well and identified areas for improvement in the conduct of future missions.

The following are the key players and actors in the implementation of this concept.

#### **A. Lead Agency**

As the Lead Agency of the ETC, Office of Civil Defense (OCD) will be the over-all multi-level operational coordinator of the Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Team (RETT).

##### *i. Pre-Disaster Phase*

1. Prepares database of RETT (List of personnel, trainings, inventory of equipment, current activities/plans).
2. Conducts communications inter-operability training and equipment usage training.
3. Conducts ICT risk assessment.
4. Alert established Operations Centers, national and local Rapid Emergency Telecoms Teams (RETT) of all Cluster Members.
5. Pre-programming of all radios to the assigned disaster frequencies on orders.
6. Provides call signs management and allocation services.
7. Provides standards for common ICT equipment and procedures.
8. Tests equipment and systems.
9. Prepares TOR for possible deployment
10. Programs the RETT and units for local and foreign trainor's trainings
11. Identifies safe EOCs, ICPs and/or areas in coordination with RDANA Teams, RDT NDRMC, and LCEs.

##### *ii. During Disaster Phase*

1. Takes part in the Rapid Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (RDANA) missions.
2. Provides basic telecoms coverage around and within the main operational area.
3. Programs radios or other equipment belonging to individual responders, organizations and other key players in disaster areas.
4. Installs and maintains internal ICT systems between Clusters and individuals independent from national or local public services.
5. Provides a directory services containing the contact information of the different key players in disaster areas.
6. Establish a dedicated GSM/LTE mobile network to be used by the Cluster workers in the operational area in partnership with TELCO(s).
7. Conducts repair and maintenance activities as needed.



8. Receives and consolidates reports.
9. Dispatches RETT as per instruction from the NDRRC.
10. Coordinates with the RETT on ground for updates and operational requirements.

***Early Recovery Phase: Response to Recovery and Rehabilitation.***

11. Coordinates and recommends to the Lead, ETC, NDRRC, Responsible Officers, LDRRMCs the termination of RETT operations as necessary.
12. Hand-over responsibility to the local counterpart in LGUs through the Chairperson, Local DRRMC.

***iii. Post Disaster Phase***

1. Coordinates the preparation of documentation for RETT requirements, lesson learned, and best practices.
2. RETT to deactivate all emergency telecommunication systems as soon as full resumption of the LGU's communication system is achieved.
3. Conducts debriefing /AAR
4. Prepares accomplishment reports
5. Continues implementation of capability development programs (organizational enhancement, training, procurement of equipment)

**B. RETT Member Agencies**

The following agencies are the members of the Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Team (RETT); Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Health (DOH), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), National Telecommunications Commission, Telecommunications Companies and Volunteers/Civil Society Organizations

These members will coordinate with the Lead, ETC and RETT Team Leaders through OCD all actions to be undertaken. They are also requested to provide at least two (2) ICT personnel with equipment, prepare contact details of national and local counterparts, and adhere to the TORs prepared by the RETT for possible deployment.

The succeeding actions from DURING to POST-DISASTER will be the same with the whole RETT organizations as mentioned above.

All other volunteer emergency telecommunications groups will coordinate with the National or local RETT for proper deployment to the affected areas.

**8.0 Coordinating Guidelines**

8.1 As Lead of the ETC, OCD will coordinate all support and requirements of RETT in their activities to augment the needs at the affected areas during disasters.

8.2 Concerned government agencies and their subordinate offices shall utilize their respective internal personnel. Additional RETT Units shall be coordinated through the Lead, ETC.

8.3 Deployment of RETT Units will have internal rotations of individual/s every six (6) hours and replacements of every ten (10) days applicable to all responders and commanders.

8.4 All RETT Units will be self-sustaining during the duration of the TORs.

8.5 Arriving RETT Units will have to check-in to the designated Check-In Desks at the EOCs, ICPs, and other strategic locations identified by the Responsible Officer in disaster affected areas.

8.6 The OCD, as Lead Coordinator of RETT will maintain a nominal list of CEIS equipment from its members.

8.7 Regular joint training of RETT members will be the responsibility of the OCD as the Emergency Telecommunications Lead Cluster in collaboration with the Vice-Chairperson for Response.

8.8 Funding for the operational and incidental requirements of RETT Units will be by agency.

## **9.0 Repealing Clause**


All existing issuances, which are inconsistent herewith, are hereby superseded. Any future reference with respect to their issuances in relation to the Operational Guidelines for the Rapid Emergency Telecommunications Teams (RETT) disaster response operations shall be made in reference to this Memorandum Circular.

## **10.0 Dissemination**

The OCD Central Office and Regional Offices, DILG as well as NDRRMC member agencies shall disseminate this memorandum circular to all LGUs within their AOR.

## **11.0 Effectivity**

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately.

  
**VOLTAIRE T. GAZMIN**  
Secretary, DND and  
Chairperson, NDRRMC



SECRETARY OF  
NATIONAL DEFENSE



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