

Preliminary Report about Service Disruption on 18 March 2013

1. Introduction

On 18 March 2013, a service disruption in outgoing calls from SmarTone customers to fixed networks occurred. Based on the information available, this preliminary report provides a detailed description of the events that led to the occurrence of this service disruption and the remedial actions taken.

SmarTone regrets the inconvenience caused to our customers and we are determined to ascertain the root cause of the problem and make improvements to prevent similar incidents in future.

2. Incident Description

2.1 Events leading to the occurrence of the service disruption

On 18 March 2013 at around 10:17 am, we observed that our customers had difficulty making outgoing calls to fixed networks. The service disruption was found to be caused by a software problem in the ONP platform, which is responsible for providing information for outgoing call routing to fixed networks. All data services, SMS and voice services, which included outgoing calls to mobile, incoming calls and emergency calls, were not affected.

2.2 Incident Event Log

Time	Event
10:17 am	SmarTone's Network Operations Centre observed that the ONP platform had encountered a problem and call routing for outgoing calls to fixed networks from our customers had failed. The problem was immediately escalated to our vendor for investigation.
10:17 am	Our support engineers and the vendor performed immediate actions to restore the ONP platform but it could not take up traffic as normal. In parallel, a procedure for bypassing the ONP platform was triggered.
10:31 am	SmarTone informed OFCA that there was a software problem in our ONP platform and that outgoing call services from our customers to fixed networks was affected. All data services, SMS and voice services, which included outgoing calls to mobile, incoming calls and emergency calls, were not affected.
11:15 am	Support engineers bypassed the ONP platform and all outgoing calls to fixed networks resumed as normal.
11:22 am	SmarTone reported to OFCA that outgoing call services to fixed networks had resumed as normal.

3. Remedial actions taken

SmarTone's support engineers and the vendor took urgent remedial actions to restore the ONP platform but it could not take up traffic as normal. Our support engineers worked in parallel to bypass the ONP platform and route all affected calls to our back-up fixed network operators for call terminations at destination networks. The bypass was completed at 11:15 am and outgoing call services to fixed networks was resumed as normal.

The ONP platform was restored by 11:21 am. However, since the root cause of the software problem was yet to be identified, detailed testing was conducted to verify its proper functioning before traffic was put back to the ONP platform. At around 8:20 pm, the ONP platform started to gradually take up traffic in a controlled manner. Since then, it has been under close observation to ensure its stability before taking up full traffic as normal.

4. Root cause analysis and problem resolution

Based on our investigation so far, the failure of the outgoing call service to fixed networks was caused by a software problem in the ONP platform. The root cause of the problem and a permanent solution for the problem are yet to be identified. While our vendor is still conducting detailed investigation on the root cause, a temporary workaround has already been implemented to prevent the re-occurrence of the problem.

5. Number of affected customers

We estimate that less than 40,000 customers, or 2.8% of our active customer base, who might have attempted to make outgoing calls to fixed networks during that period of time were affected.

6. Communication with our customers and the public on the incident

SmarTone has communicated with customers and the public about the service disruption through the following channels on the day of incident:

6.1 Communication through our Retail and Hotline staff

Immediately after the occurrence of the service disruption, our retail and hotline were notified about the situation.

At 11:30 am, notification was issued to inform retail and hotline staff that service had been restored.

6.2 Communication through Facebook

At 10:56 am, a notification was posted about the service disruption.

At 11:31 am, an updated notification was posted about the service restoration.

6.3 Communication to customers via Corporate Website

At 10:57 am, a notification was posted about the service disruption.

At 11:31 am, an updated notification was posted about the service restoration.

6.4 Communication to the media

At 10:57 am, an email was sent to mass media about the service disruption.

At 11:31 am, an email was sent to mass media about the service restoration.