

Unified Communications Offer Respite From Loadshedding

South Africa's electricity woes continue with renewed vigor as an Eskom media statement this week warned of the necessity of loadshedding to avert a potential 'total blackout'.

The energy availability of Eskom's generation fleet is supposed to be as high as 80%, but by last month it had dwindled to as low as 69%, an Eskom board member warned recently.

This comes on the back of the recent breakdown of an automated coal feeder at the power utility's underperforming Medupi power station added to dwindling back-up diesel reserves, poor distribution network maintenance and the collapse of the Cahora Bassa imported power supply earlier this year.

As they go about the business of earning a living this summer; South Africans are now certain to experience traffic snarl-ups as lights fail, parking nightmares as paying for a spot becomes impossible and even rumbling stomachs as drive-throughs shutter for load-shedding.

The solution, says leading independent telco ICTGlobe.com, is for the 9-5ers to revisit such concepts as telecommuting and flexi-time because working smarter using the latest available technology is the best way most of us can avoid the load-shedding fallout.

In particular, ICTGlobe.com believes that Unified Communications (UM) delivered via IP-driven switchboards such as the 3CX platform can enable functionality that can be a real help to corporate employees, SME business owners and others during load-shedding.

For example, the 'single inbox' enabled by UM is of tremendous value during extended power outages, explains Riaan van Stryp, ICTGlobe.com General Manager. A single inbox means the ability to reach employees wherever they are using whatever format is suitable at a specific time. Load-shedding, as well all know from personal experiences of flat batteries, totally compromises reachability.

"UM means each phone, tablet, laptop and desktop used by the employee essentially becomes a redundant replica of the other devices, at least in messaging terms. Every voicemail, text message and email is accessible on any device that may still have battery life in it. That's a big help in carrying on being effective during load-shedding," says Mr Van Stryp.

In addition, mobility is a plus during rolling load-shedding that affects different areas at different times. "The virtual 3CX PBX platform that enables Unified Communications is Cloud-based meaning it is accessible on any PC or mobile interface - anywhere," Mr Van Stryp says.

Hosted switchboard solutions from 3CX means any enterprise-class or SME firm can benefit from corporate-quality unified communications platforms without the need for clunky physical equipment. Load-shedding is just one more reason to go virtual.

“One could say that Eskom has become the final nail in the coffin of the clunky, desk-bound, reception area PBX system of yesteryear,” concludes Mr Van Stryp.

As a Tier 1 operator, ICTGlobe.com owns its telecoms network meaning it has full control over roll-out and maintenance of this core asset. Operating its own interconnect and networking facilities means the firm can reliably offer voice calls at the country's most competitive rates.

ICTGlobe.com's guaranteed voice and data services uptime is underpinned by its investment in offsite data centres that offer clients additional redundancy. Uptime is ensured with double backup power generators that keep ICTGlobe's Cloud-based services running during load-shedding. In addition, each primary and secondary data centre power feed is fed through automated switchover UPS equipment, each with their own battery banks.