



SS507 Went International

- The Release of ISO/IEC 24762

■ **In 2004 Singapore first published SS507**, the Standard for Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Service Provider. Since then, the standard has gone extra miles both in the promotion and application in the industry, as well as becoming an international standard. The article intends to update readers on the recent development of the standard and introduces the related international standard, ISO/IEC 24762. ■

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1 BACKGROUND

In the modern global economy, organisations become more reliant on the infocomm infrastructure to continuously operate and deliver their services, whether it is a multinational logistics service provider, a local manufacturer, a government agency or a financial institute. The awareness of the importance of business continuity has grown due to the threats from terrorism, natural disaster and geopolitical tension. Multinational companies are increasingly concerned over the resilience of companies' infocomm infrastructure worldwide. They are looking at alternative locations for recovery purposes in the event of disruptions. A number of service providers have taken advantage of this new market demand to achieve a high growth in infocomm technology disaster recovery (ICT DR) business while new providers are entering the market place to have a share.

Before the publication of SS507 standard in 2004, there was no established standard to govern the minimum requirements to which ICT DR service provider can comply. The service standard of the ICT DR service provision may vary among different service providers or even among the different sites of the same service provider. This is a risk to the organisations seeking to outsource their ICT DR service provision, especially when the nature of the service makes it very likely that the organisation can only discover the insufficiency of the service provision too late - usually at the time that a major disaster happened when it is found that the recovery service is not able to provide timely recovery as required.

The SS507, Singapore Standard for Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Service Provider, was prepared by the Security and Privacy Standards Technical Committee under the purview of the Information Technology Standards Committee (ITSC) and first published in 2004 to address this in-sufficiency. Since then it has helped ICT DR service providers to differentiate themselves and retain their competitive advantage, both locally and regionally, and at the same time helped end-user organisations to choose the most suitable ICT DR service provider.

2 PUBLICATION OF ISO/IEC 24762:2008

In January 2008, SS507:2004 went international. By contributing SS507 as a base document, this Singapore Standard has constituted a major part of the International Standard ISO/IEC 24762 Guidelines for ICT DR Services which was published in January 2008.

ISO/IEC 24762:2008 was developed by the joint technical committee ISO¹/IEC² JTC 1, Information Technology, Subcommittee (SC) 27, IT Security Techniques. As a contrast to SS507, this international standard is a guideline document introducing the best practices in ICT DR service provision. It can be used by both in-housed and outsourced service providers to build resilience into their ICT infrastructure critical to their key business activities.

3 OVERVIEW OF ISO/IEC 24762:2008

The framework for ICT DR service provision, as outlined by ISO/IEC 24762:2008, is best illustrated by Figure 1 [1].

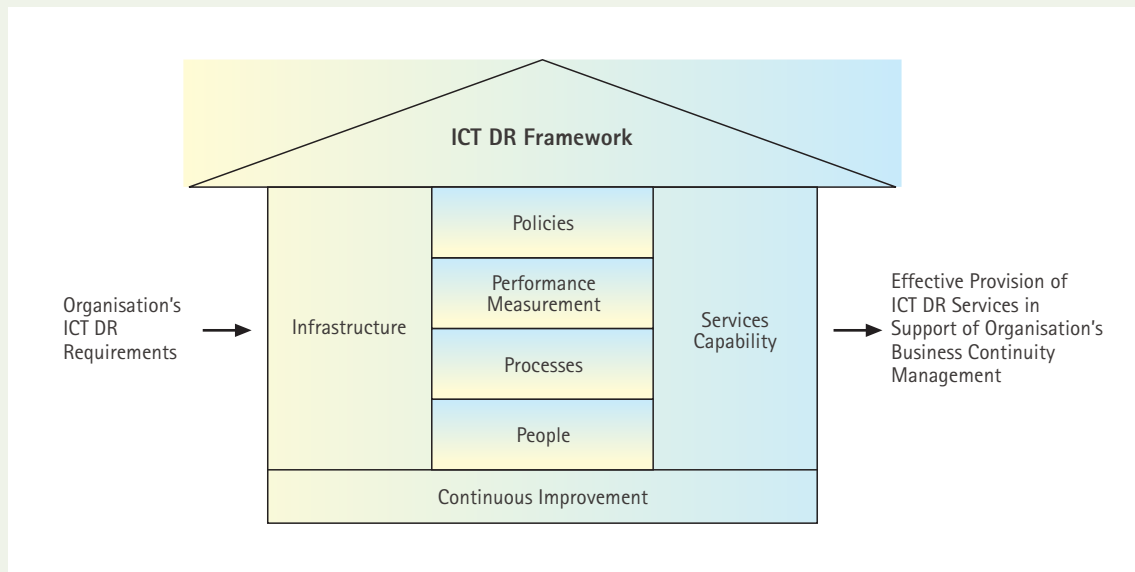


Figure 1: ICT DR Framework

¹ International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

² International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)

The best practices included in ISO/IEC 24762:2008 cover the following areas:

- Implementing, operating, monitoring and maintaining the necessary facilities and services for disaster recovery;
- Fallback and recovery support for an organisation's ICT systems;
- Capabilities that outsourced ICT DR Service providers need to possess and the practices they should follow, so as to provide basic secure operating environments and facilitate the organisation's recovery efforts; and
- Continuous improvements of ICT DR service providers.

This standard also provides guidance on the selection of recovery site, considering factors such as environmental stability, good infrastructure and so on.

4 REVISION AND ALIGNMENT OF SS507

After the publication of ISO/IEC 24762:2008, Singapore has aligned her local standard SS507 with the international standard and published the revised SS507:2008 in February 2008. The major difference between these two standards is that the Singapore Standard is a certifiable standard whilst the international standard is intended to be a guideline.

The revised SS507 standard is a modified adoption of ISO/IEC 24762:2008 - "Guidelines for information and communications technology disaster recovery services", and drafted to incorporate some modifications as specified in Table 1 below [2]:

Clause/Subclause	Modification
General	Changed all "should" to "shall" to specify the clauses as requirements, except those clauses that need to remain as optional requirements.
	Changed all relevant "guidance" to "requirements" to specify the clauses as requirements.
Clause 1.4	Included a new clause 1.4 in to specify certification types and their respective applicable clauses.
Clause 2	Added "ISO/IEC 24762:2008" as normative reference.
Clause 7.15.2	Added a note to explain how the clause can apply to outsourced service providers.

Table 1: Revision and alignment of SS507

SS507:2008 is targeted at ICT DR Service Providers (both internal and outsourced) that wish to be certified or organisations that wish to use this standard as a reference document. It provides a basis to certify and differentiate outsourced ICT DR service providers, at the same time help organisations in planning the best solution for their ICT DR need (regardless of whether it is an in-house solution or an outsourcing arrangement).

5 CONCLUSION

Since the publication of SS507 in 2004, most of the major local ICT DR outsourced service providers have been certified to this standard [3]. The certification will continue to be an effective means for the providers to demonstrate their capabilities and provide assurance to both local and regional clients. As the awareness of the international standard rises, it can be foreseen that the application of the SS507 / ISO/IEC 27462 will not be limited by geographical boundary.

In 2007, an internal ICT DR service provider in the financial sector was certified to the standard. As the SS507:2008 and ISO/IEC 24762 applies to both outsourced service providers and internal service providers, it is expected that there will be a rising trend for organisations that arrange and provide their own ICT DR services to adopt the standard.

With the new release of the ISO/IEC 24762, the best practices in ICT DR service provision have caught the attention of the international community. The press release [4] issued by ISO about the publication of ISO/IEC 24762 mentioned that, "With this new standard, organisations will be able to build resilience into their information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure critical to their key business activities. This will complement their business continuity management initiative (to better manage relevant risks possibly interrupting their business activities) and their information security management initiative (to effectively protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information)".

Copies of the SS507:2008 can be purchased online from <http://www.singaporestandardseshop.sg/Product/Home.aspx> while the ISO/IEC 24762:2008 can be purchased at the site <http://www.iso.org/iso/store.htm>.

6 REFERENCES

- [1] ISO/IEC 24762:2008, Information technology - Security techniques - Guidelines for information and communications technology disaster recovery services.
- [2] SS507:2008, Singapore Standard for Information and communications technology (ICT) disaster recovery (DR) services.
- [3] List of BC/DR Certified Companies, TÜV SÜD PSB Certification Pte Ltd.
Available from: http://www.psbcert.com/srh_tsbcd.html
- [4] Press Release from ISO, "Managing crises with new ISO/IEC standard for IT disaster recovery" on 6 March 2008.
Available from <http://www.iso.org/iso/pressrelease.htm?refid=Ref1118>