



Help, my mobile **does not work!**

Guide for strengthening the communications capabilities of young people in emergencies and crises



Pelastakaa Lapset - Rädda Barnen
Save the Children



Punainen Risti

Mobile phone - is it the most important item also in the case of disruption?

Nowadays the use of social media and the Internet on a mobile phone is self-evident to many of us. We do not really even think how difficult everyday life would be without mobile connectivity. Mobile phones and other mobile devices are so important to us that they wake us up in the morning, and we fall asleep after having read the last messages.

Many of us find it difficult if, for example, we go on a vacation to a place where the Net does not work or its use is difficult, expensive and restricted. We are privileged in many countries: the use of the Internet on the mobile phone is inexpensive, and the prices of smartphones have come down so much that more and more people can afford them. Furthermore, information flows freely in the Net in many countries; in Finland, for example, the network content is hardly censored.

Even though in general connections work smoothly in Finland, the authorities and parties responsible for the data communication systems and networks are constantly prepared for various situations where the citizens' communication via the computer and mobile phone may become difficult. Small problems are solved constantly: every day broken network connections are being fixed somewhere, but interruptions are not necessarily even noticed. Various actors prepare for more serious incidents and organise mock drills.

The purpose of this guide is to provide tools which help to ensure that every young person has adequate communications capabilities and competences if they find themselves in an exceptional situation. In such situations mobile phones do not necessarily work, the network may go down, the phone battery may run out or it may be necessary to use the phone for seeking help. This material gives tips and answers for acting in various situations at home and abroad.

We would like to thank the experts who participated in producing this guide: Head of Department Ville Viherä from Telia Company, Desk Officer Iiris Strandman from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Chief Inspector Sami Hätönen from the National Police Board. The original guide in Finnish was produced in cooperation of the Children and Digital Media Unit of Save the Children Finland and the Finnish Red Cross for preparedness training organised in 2016. This translation is designed for support for young people living in Finland and abroad as well as for adults working with them.

Google: "I know everything."
Facebook: "I know everybody."
Internet: "Without me, you all are nothing!"
Electricity: "Yeah, keep talking fools..."

Ponder! A well-known Internet meme describes the relationship between the applications, the Net and the electricity grid. What thoughts does it provoke in you?

Ponder! The African state of Sierra Leone, with the same number of inhabitants as Finland, has approximately

260,000 Internet users. In Finland, for example, this would mean in theory that only the number of people living in one city would have an access to the Net. Think about your home country: how large a share of people have the possibility of using the Net? What would your home country be like if only a limited elitist group could use the Net?

The operator ensures that your mobile works

The mobile operator is the first party an ordinary citizen contacts if the mobile phone loses the network. The mobile operator is responsible for the functioning of telecommunications between the clients, such as consumers, entrepreneurs and authorities. Operators ensure that the base stations of a mobile communication network are functioning. Mobile phones establish a connection with a mobile switching centre or fixed network via base stations.

Sometimes errors occur in telecommunications, which may result in momentary or longer interruptions. Network problems are typically related to problems in electricity supply, cable faults or technical problems in the network. An exceptional situation may arise when, for example, an excavator accidentally damages a data cable, breaking down the connection. In most cases exceptional situations are of short duration and local in nature.

In problem situations operators dispatch a team which starts to investigate where the fault is. The problem may be local, in which case the mobile phone loses coverage in a certain relatively small area. Extreme weather phenomena, such as strong storms, may affect the operation of base stations also in Finland. If, for example, a power cut persists, the backup power system of the base station may also conk out and then the connection breaks down.

Ponder! *In conflict areas terrorist groups and various armed groups may destroy base stations, for example, to hamper the operation of spies. Search the Net for news and examples of situations where base stations have been destroyed. What harm can the destroying of base stations cause to an ordinary citizen in war or conflict areas?*

Exercise: *We live in a world where data connections play an immense role in our everyday life. Consider your ordinary day and think in what kind of situations you need a mobile phone so that your day goes smoothly. Make a list of the sites and services you use. Compare the list with your classmate.*

Can the network go blank?

If something happens suddenly that affects the use of mobile phones by ordinary citizens, this does not in principle affect the activities of the authorities. The authorities simultaneously use several networks for communication. For example, the Finnish communication systems are among the best ones in the world, and the authorities act in close cooperation in crisis situations. Development work is carried out constantly, and in future, for example, the authorities can send emergency announcements directly to mobile phones.

Can all phone and Internet communications be paralysed by pressing one button like in catastrophe movies? A total shutdown of phone and data communications is quite a difficult task. The newest phone models function in 2G, 3G and 4G networks. Consequently, it is likely that one of the networks works if another one is down. This also means that even if you could not use the phone for calling, you can likely use the Net on your phone and vice versa.

Neither does it matter if individual base stations are broken. In this case information is transmitted via other base stations. It would also be exceptional that the telecommunications networks of all operators would break at the same time. Furthermore, the systems have been developed to allow emergency calls to go through in crisis situations even if it were difficult to make other calls or use the Internet.

In a crisis situation, be it a major or a minor incident, you should not cause extra load to the network without a reason. For example, in the case of an accident you should not start live-streaming from the scene on the social media and you should turn off all unnecessary data communication on your phone.

Examples of useful Finnish mobile applications

If you need to make an emergency call in Finland, you can use the 112 mobile application. It allows the emergency response centre to see where you are calling from. Satellite navigation allows locating the caller even within dozens of metres. Set the application in a visible place on your mobile screen so that it is available in an emergency and you do not need to look for it.

www.112.fi

Regrettably, many people become subjects of harassment and bullying, even victims of a crime on the Internet and in IRL (in real life). Save the Children Finland has developed a Help.some application for contacting educated and reliable adults in a quick and easy manner. You can submit a question via the application and receive an answer to your own phone or you can ask about the matter in a private chat. The people working in Help.some are employees of Save the Children Finland as well as employees of the victim support service RIKU and police officers working online in the Helsinki region.

www.helpsome.fi

The use of the ICE abbreviation (in case of emergency) means that you save the number of a next of kin in your phone book under the ICE name, e.g. "ICE Mother". In Finland you can download a mobile application of the Finnish Red Cross into your smartphone so that you can put your ICE contact on your phone's lock screen. This way the information is easily available for helpers. **www.spr.fi/mobiilisovellus**

Exercise: *If you do not live in Finland, search for mobile applications available in your country which could be useful in various emergency or exceptional situations.*

Exercise: *Check the Internet where you can find your own operator's fault notifications. Fault notifications provide important information on where there are problems in your country, what is causing them and when they will be fixed. Fault notifications are often also updated on the operator's social media channels. You can also inform the operator of a fault yourself if you do not find updated information on the operator's website.*

Exercise: *Discuss with your friend who would be important ICE contacts on your phones. Add at least one ICE number to your own phone book. Think about situations where an ICE number would come in handy. Could the ICE number also be useless in an emergency?*

Should I video an incident?

If you take pictures or videos at a scene, in some situations they might help the authorities in their work. You can save the material in your phone and later ask the authorities whether they have use for it. Never put yourself in danger when taking pictures or videos at a scene, make room for the rescue workers and do not disturb their work. The material should not be shared in the social media, and it is not necessary as such to start taking pictures or videos, for example, at an accident scene.

It is good to be cautious with the social media in a crisis. It is worth thinking carefully what to post on the social media and why you want to share material on the Net. Consider what your objectives are and what your communication could cause. Check at least the following before posting:

- Make sure you are not violating anybody's privacy or dignity.
- Does this make the authorities' work easier or more difficult?
- Am I mainly trying to get likes for my content and attention for myself - is this necessary?
- Am I jeopardising the police's work? For example, by posting pictures of a police operation you may unknowingly put the police and the nearby people in further danger.

Get to know the social media platforms

If you find information, pictures and videos related to a crisis in the social media, it is also worth considering carefully whether to share them. During conflicts, wrong, erroneous and even intentionally misrepresented information will spread quickly online. In this case it is extremely important to check the source of information.

In Finland you will receive the most reliable information on exceptional situations from the authorities. For example, the police actively provides information on changing situations online via the services that people commonly use. Finnish online police officers normally share various content on Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, and in the case of emergency, information on how to act will also be available in the social media.

You can contact online police officers working at the police departments in Finland any time in issues requiring no urgent solving of the situation. If you are in distress and in a hurry, always call the emergency number and do not write a message to the inbox of the police department's social media profile. In Finland you can make an emergency call also when the balance on your phone has run out or when it is locked. If your phone is out of order, look for the nearest person or place where you can make an emergency call.

Exercise: Check the police website of your own country to find out whether the police department in your region has an online police officer. You can also check the services where police officers work in general. If there is an online police officer working in your area, in an emergency it is easy to check the familiar channels for how to act.

My phone died!

If your phone says that it cannot connect with the network, it is worth trying several ways to solve the problem.

- Reset the phone, in which case it cuts off the connection with the base station. You can also try to switch to the flight mode and then back to the normal mode. Wait and see whether the network will be restored.
- If this does not help, you can remove the SIM card. When you buy a new phone, check how you can remove the SIM card and put it back. You cannot necessarily google for the instructions when your phone dies out.
- If you are inside, go out and seek a place that is as high as possible so that your mobile phone can scan for base stations in the surroundings.
- If there are other people around, ask them whether their mobile phones work and which operator they use. In most cases the problems of one operator do not influence the operation of other operators.
- If you are close to a library or a cafe, you can use the Net by logging into an open Wi-Fi, i.e. a wireless network. Many city areas are provided with open networks which you can use for messaging even if you could not make any calls. Your friend can also share the network of his or her mobile phone with your phone.
- Emergency calls are prioritised in mobile networks, meaning that calling the emergency number is possible even if other calls did not work. If you are in distress and call the emergency number and cannot get through at the first attempt, try for a second or a third time.
- If you know that you will depend on the mobile phone for a longer time, get yourself a backup power source. Make sure that your backup power source is charged since it can help you in an emergency if your mobile phone runs out of battery.

Exercise: Social media applications and games, a large touch screen and communication often use a lot of power and the battery may run out when you least expect it. Get to know the power save options of your mobile phone: can you turn off automatic updates, how to limit notifications, and can you turn off automatic location services of applications. Use wlan, bluetooth, nfc and gps functions only when you need them. Set the screen brightness lower. Set the screen to turn off as quickly as possible.

How do I prepare for going abroad?

Many of us dream of a vacation, student exchange, language trip or even of moving abroad. Depending on the country, data connections may differ even considerably from what we are used to in our home country. It may be difficult and expensive to use the connections, sometimes even impossible.

Travellers may face various situations abroad where a mobile phone is necessary. They may get lost or end up in the middle of a crowd or demonstrations. In this case it is good if you have figured out in advance how to act if something unexpected happens.

- Find out whether you can submit a travel notification in your home country and how this is done. In Finland, for example, you can file a travel notification with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In emergencies or crises the Ministry for Foreign Affairs may contact citizens who have filed a travel notification and thus ensure their safety.
- Familiarise yourself with the travel notification for your destination country and save the contact information of your home country's embassy located in the destination country in your mobile phone.
- Save the emergency number of your insurance company in your mobile phone.
- Save the number of the blocking service for your debit and credit cards in your mobile phone.
- Write down the contact information of the tour operator as well as the service number of your own mobile operator.
- Write down also the phone numbers of close relatives, such as your parents. It is also worth learning them by heart.
- Scan copies of the passport, visas and tickets with your phone. You can also send them to your own email where you can access them if you lose the original documents.

Ponder! Do you think the above list lacks something relevant? Ponder with your pair what else you might need to take into account when leaving for a trip. Write these issues down for future trips.

Tip! Are you going for a trip? If you have an unused mobile phone and charger lying in a drawer, take them with you. If your mobile phone is stolen or it breaks, you can use the backup phone. In many countries you can buy a local pre-paid subscription so that you can contact home.

Tip! Did you know that the emergency number 112 works in all EU countries but not in every European country nor elsewhere in the world? Save the local emergency number in your mobile phone already before leaving for a trip. Lists of emergency numbers of different countries available in the Internet are not necessarily reliable because the information may have become outdated or it has been collected from unreliable sources.

Follow the instructions and stay safe

Data connections may become overloaded or cut off in crises. In this case you must follow the instructions of the local authorities and move quickly to the safest possible place. Usually local radio and television broadcasts provide information on the situation.

- Do not start taking videos or photos in the middle of the crowd but try to get away.
- Follow the authorities' announcements in different media. The authorities may also be active in various social media channels and use them for informing citizens.

- Make sure you inform your parents and other important adults in your life that you are safe and also update this information on the social media. This way people can see that you are fine.
- If your own mobile does not work, ask at your hotel or other place of accommodation whether you can call home. Hotels often also have free-of-charge computers which you can use for sending messages home and taking care of affairs.

Tip! Did you know that even if you could call the emergency response centre from a locked mobile phone in your home country, this does not necessarily work abroad? Many countries have different numbers for the fire brigade, ambulance and police. So do not rely on being able to call the right actor in an emergency if the balance on your phone has run out or the screen is locked.

Tip! Did you know that Facebook, for example, has a Safety Check feature which searches for users who are logged in, for example, in an area where a terrorist attack or an earthquake has taken place and offers the users the possibility of telling that they are safe.

Crisis chat: an example from Finland

Save the Children Finland maintains preparedness for opening a Crisis Chat for children and young people should a major accident affecting all Finnish children or another unpleasant or frightening incident take place. Both educated adults working on a voluntary basis and employees of Save the Children Finland are on-duty in the Crisis Chat. You can talk with an adult in the Crisis Chat and share your fears and anxiety in a safe environment. The counsels can also advise you further, if the discussion does not make you feel better. Follow information in Finnish via the online youth centre Netari at **www.netari.fi**.

Exercise: Get to know the actors in your own country which help people in crises, such as crisis response centres, nationwide crisis helplines and online services. In what kind of situations could these services be of help in your opinion?

Can you act in the right way?

Familiarise yourself with the following situations and discuss them with your pair or in a small group. Why do you think the person acted in the way he or she did and what consequences could the act or failure to act have? What would you have done yourself? You can check on the last page of this publication whether you were right.

- James is having an ordinary evening at home. All of a sudden a police car drives to the front door of the neighbouring house. What on earth is going on? James opens the window and grabs his mobile phone. He turns on videoing and live-streaming. James shares the video link in a group with hundreds of people living in the same area.
- Wilson is outside playing a mobile game. All of a sudden the mobile phone switches off: the game has used the battery up. After a while Wilson senses a surprisingly strong smell of smoke and notices that a bright fire is glowing on the outskirts of the suburb. There is a fire close by! Wilson panics. He thinks that he should now get hold of an adult but how

since he cannot use his mobile phone?

- Emily is riding home with her scooter late on a summer evening. Suddenly she slows down: there is an accident ahead. Two cars have had an accident and crashed into each other. It is totally quiet. There is no police or ambulance or anybody else at the scene. Emily stops the scooter, takes out her mobile phone and snaps a few photos so that she can show them to the police as evidence from the accident scene.
- Sophie is abroad with friends and they are spending an afternoon in the city centre. All of a sudden they hear a big bang from an adjacent building. They are wondering what it was. Sophie tells all her friends to take out their phones and start taking photos and videos of the building so that they can share them on the social media among the first ones.

Children and Digital Media Unit - what is it?

[The Children and Digital Media Unit of Save the Children](#)

[Finland](#) works for safeguarding the status, inclusion and rights of children in digital media environments. Our key activities include the online youth centre [Netari](#) with its various activities and the online tip service [Nettivistie](#), via which people can report pictures and videos



related to sexual abuse of children. The work aims at supporting, in particular, the well-being of the most disadvantaged children and young people, reducing loneliness and enhancing opportunities for inclusion. We also want to increase the ability of adults to recognise and address online sexual abuse. Do you want to give feedback on this material or do you have other questions? Contact our team and follow us in the social media [#netari](#) ja [#nettivistie](#)!

Antti Järventaus, Manager

Anniina Lundvall, Expert

Sonja Ahtiainen, Community Manager

Martti Härmä, Community Manager

Netta Vahteri, Community Manager

Send email to firstname.lastname@savethechildren.fi. Phone numbers are available at www.pelastakalapset.fi/ota-yhteytta.

Model answers

These are model answers to the situations described on the previous pages. Check whether you would have acted in the same way.

James: *Make sure that you are safe yourself and if necessary, wait for further information from the authorities. Since the police is already at the scene, the authorities do not need photo or video material taken by an outsider. Such material should not be shared in the social media. Sharing the material in the social media may also attract unwanted audience and thus hinder the work of the authorities and compromise safety. In the case of crimes and accidents, the rescue authorities always have the responsibility of informing people, not the eyewitnesses.*

Wilson: *Do not go on your own to the fire area to find out what is going on. Approach a passer-by or a person living in the neighbourhood and ask whether you can borrow his or her mobile phone to make an emergency call. Let people at home also know where you are and that you are safe. Emergency announcements are broadcast on the radio and TV, where the authorities may, for example, advise people to stay inside.*

Emily: *The very first thing you should do is to call the emergency number and tell calmly what has happened. Follow the instructions given by the emergency response centre. Prevent further damage by warning other road users by turning on the hazard lights and by taking a hazard warning triangle at an adequate distance from the vehicle. If possible, switch the engines off. Then rescue the people whose life is in danger and help the others in the cars: move the injured persons to a safe spot and check whether they can breathe. Bandage large bleeding wounds. If necessary, your mobile phone functions as a flashlight.*

Sophie: *First make sure that you and your friends get to a safe place. Stay there and follow announcements on the event, if possible. Wait for the instructions from the authorities and act accordingly. Even though material saved by eyewitnesses in crisis situations is often shared in broadsheets and tabloids as well as in the social media, photographing or videoing at the cost of your own safety and that of others is of secondary importance.*