

Minimum Technical Requirements for EMS (QCOM Protocol)

Introduction

The minimum equipment standards for the EMS QCOM Protocol were notified in the *NZ Gazette* on 25 May 2006. The standard incorporates specifications produced by the Queensland Office of Gaming Regulation. Copies of the standard and the incorporated Queensland documents are available on the Department's website www.dia.govt.nz.

The standard details communication and operational requirements for both the gaming machine and site controller. The standard is divided into a number of sections specifying exclusions, amendments and additions to the Queensland specifications to fit New Zealand requirements for EMS.

The majority of the standard requirements relate to the means by which the site controller and gaming machine communicate with each other. The following paragraphs highlight particular requirements that you should be aware of.

Hopper Refill and Cancel Credit Default Settings

Venues are currently able to decide the amount at which the hopper refill and cancel credit levels are set. These levels are set according to the preferences of individual operators or venues. However, the Minimum Standards for QCOM protocol requires that there is a global default setting.

A \$200 global default setting for both cancel credit and hopper refills has been included in the minimum standard, and will be applied when a venue connects to EMS.

While a default minimum amount is set for hopper refills, venue operators will still be able to refill hoppers with amounts other than the default value. The actual amount of the hopper refill will need to be entered in test/audit mode each time a refill is made if the amount of the refill differs to the default amount of \$200. Please contact your equipment supplier for details of how to do this for your gaming machines.

We realise that this may not be ideal, but in order to provide as much flexibility as possible to operators, the QCOM minimum equipment standard stipulates that all **new** software submitted for approval must have the ability for venues to adjust, in either test or audit mode, the default settings for both hopper refill and cancelled credit levels. Some of the new software recently approved has this functionality. Please contact your local equipment supplier for information on whether this option has been included in the gaming machine software you are using.

We will continue to monitor the effect of this requirement on venues and assess whether any further measures need to be taken.

QCOM Meters

An additional meter (QCOM) has been added to the required QCOM group gaming machine accounting meters to record all wins from jackpots that download direct to the gaming machine such as the current Cashcade jackpot.

The QCOM meters have different names and in a few cases record different information to those currently in use. Additional details are available on the DIA website, www.dia.govt.nz. (Go to Gambling >>> Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) >>> EMS Gaming Machine QCOM Meters)

Connection to the Site Controller

Section 4 of the minimum equipment standard applies to the site controller and enforces gaming machine protocol requirements.

The EMS must permanently store gaming machine meter and event data for a range of operating and non-operating conditions. One of these conditions is to do so at the end of the daily accounting period.

Note: the accounting period is defined in Game Rules to commence at 2am and end at 2am the following day. That is, at 2am every day the site controller will take a snapshot of all QCOM meters for every gaming machine connected. This snapshot is then processed and available on the EMS website from 8am.

Meter and event data must be stored in the site controller until it is retrieved and stored permanently by the EMS host system. Failure of the EMS host to retrieve this data may, over a long period of time, cause the gaming machine to cease operation if its event log becomes full. However, in the unlikely event that the EMS system is unable to contact the venue site controller for an extended period of time (e.g. 31 days or more) the site controller can autonomously clear the event queue after first storing the data on its hard disc.

Gaming Venue Electronic Meter Access

Section 5 of the minimum equipment standard details:

- How venues can access gaming machine meters during the day
- How jackpots connect to the site controller and how daily jackpot turnover, win and current display values can be accessed.

Non-downloadable ('hand pay') jackpots will need to be re-cabled for connection to the site controller to allow the EMS to access jackpot win information for the accurate calculation of Gaming Machine Proceeds (GMP). The site controller will regularly poll the jackpot controller to obtain the audit data, and will synchronise a final poll for the day at 2am along with the daily gaming machine snapshot.

Note: EMS cannot configure jackpots, this is still performed by the jackpot installer.

Cabling requirements for jackpots are provided in an additional advisory (See ‘Cabling Advisory’). The following are the currently approved non-downloadable jackpot systems:

- Mikohn Approval Number 13701
- Translux Approval Number 13601
- Fortune Approval Number 11807

The approval number is the number allocated to the jackpot controller. The actual jackpot in operation at your venue may have a different marketing name.

The Cashcade downloadable jackpot (Approval Number 10514) continues to operate under the current cabling arrangements and will not have to be recabled.

Your venue jackpot installation must meet the following conditions in order to operate under EMS:

- 1. Only one non-downloadable jackpot system can be in operation per venue (there is no restriction on the number of downloadable jackpot systems in operation).**
- 2. An individual gaming machine is only to be connected to one jackpot system (either downloadable or non-downloadable).**

Note: Non-downloadable jackpots should be left on permanently to ensure the site controller can access the jackpot controller for the daily 2am snapshot.

If the required site controller to jackpot controller cabling is not completed, the jackpot systems will not be able to be operated under EMS. The site controller needs to connect to the jackpot system to obtain jackpot win amounts to allow accurate calculation of GMP.

Electronic Meter Access

The cabling re-arrangements necessary to connect the jackpot system to the site controller mean that you will no longer be able to access jackpot information (or reports) as you currently do. In many cases access will no longer be necessary and the same information will be available on the EMS website from 8am daily.

However, venues that require access to jackpot information on demand (e.g. for non-downloadable jackpots) will need to cable the venue PC to the site controller, and install a special software special application called “ Electronic Meter Access” or EMA. This application allows a venue to access the same jackpot information you have previously had access to throughout the day. It also enables current meter values for gaming machine QCOM meters to be similarly viewed or downloaded.

To use this functionality, the venue will require a computer with a spare serial port (no modem), running either a Microsoft Windows 2000 or XP operating system. The venue must have a serial cable and connectors (in accordance with the RS-232 specification) to connect the venue

computer to the site controller interface. It must be possible for the venue to connect and retrieve current meters from the gaming machines and hand-pay jackpot system.

Earlier versions of Microsoft Windows operating systems are not supported.

EMA software can be downloaded straight from the EMS website once the venue has been enrolled in the system. The software, EMA.exe (Electronic Meter Access application), is used to request and retrieve QCOM Group 0 and Group 1 meters and required jackpot audit meters files where Fortune, Translux or Mikohn non-downloadable jackpot controllers are in operation. The venue computer can make up to 20 requests per day per file. Intralot New Zealand's EMA Manual, to be released shortly, will provide further details about the operation of the venue Electronic Meter Access application.

Note: The jackpot information provided is only that for that day. Historical information (e.g. jackpot wins) for previous days are obtained from the website reports.

Where a venue chooses not to use the Electronic Meter Access application to request and retrieve electronic meters then:

1. Gaming machine meters can be accessed and recorded manually in gaming machine audit mode.
2. If jackpot meters are not directly accessible by a venue computer connected directly to the jackpot controller, the jackpot manufacturer or their authorised agent will need to be contacted to electronically retrieve and record these meters.