

How can I determine when a meeting contribution document (TDoc) became publicly available?

TDoc numbers start to be allocated some weeks before a 3GPP meeting; the authors then create them and they or the group's secretary uploads them to the public file server as soon as possible. Some may have been distributed to the group's members in draft form for review, using the email exploder, in advance of the final version becoming available, and for some groups, it is normal to distribute even the final TDoc via the exploder, from where the secretary picks it up and copies it to the public server.

Most Groups have a deadline for their meetings by which TDocs should have been uploaded. Contributions uploaded after this point are considered to be "late" and will be addressed during the meeting only at the Chair's discretion, depending on the time available. Typically, at the start of a meeting, most TDocs for which numbers have been reserved are available. However, during the meeting, it is normal for further TDoc numbers to be reserved and uploaded. Typically, the final number of TDocs can be double the number reserved at the start of the meeting. Such TDocs are not subject to the "late" rules described above because they are generally produced as a result of discussions during the meeting itself.

TDoc numbers are allocated sequentially, from lowest to highest.

This distribution on the group's email exploder is important, because once that happens, the document is effectively in the public domain, since membership of the exploder is open to all and is (almost) unpoliced.

As noted above, during the meeting, further TDocs are created, mostly revisions of ones available before the meeting, but usually some brand new ones too – for example, outgoing liaison statements. These are uploaded to the *meeting* server, but may or may not be uploaded to the *public* server during the meeting. (Since 2014, for most meetings, meeting server contents have been mirrored to a folder on the public server, but these copies are deleted after the end of the meeting.)

Soon after the end of the meeting – at worst within a few days – the TDocs created during the meeting are uploaded by the secretary to the public server. Occasionally, some matters from the meeting cannot be resolved until maybe one week later, and these might result in some very late TDocs which are produced well after the end of the meeting, and thus uploaded onto the public server correspondingly late.

When the secretary copies from the meeting server (or from their own PC) to the public server, they may opt to only copy the missing files (i.e. the new ones), which is the best approach; or they may decide to overwrite everything and thus do a complete refresh of the files on the public server, which will now get an upload date/time-stamp of the new upload. This latter approach is now deprecated but has sometimes

happened; you can detect this most easily when a meeting shows the same date/time-stamp for all or nearly all TDoc files, and this date/time-stamp is after the end of the meeting.

In cases such as this, one has to descend to greater subterfuge to narrow down the likely “public availability” moment. The zip file for a TDoc typically contains a Word file which has its own date/time-stamp, which puts an absolute limit on the earliest moment that the TDoc could have become available in that form.

Searching the group’s email exploder archive (<http://list.etsi.org/scripts/wa.exe?INDEX>) on or about the suspected production date gleaned from the file date/time-stamp may well reveal the message in which the TDoc was *first* distributed, or perhaps the message by which the group’s secretary announced that it was available on the server. Note however that this technique does not reveal any earlier versions of the TDoc which might have been circulated, either as draft versions of the identified TDoc or as other Tdocs which were ultimately revised into the actual TDoc of interest. In order to identify this latter case, it is necessary to refer to the official secretary’s report of the meeting, where the train of revisions will be evident.

Some final considerations:

- Some FTP tools will retain the original timestamp of a file when copying it to (or from) a server, whilst others will use the current time for the new copy.
- The observed timestamp of a file depends on the time zone and the daylight saving time setting in force. Thus the apparent upload time of a given file may vary when viewed in summer compared to when viewed in winter.