

Announcement

Cummings Retires After a Long Career in Reliability

April 3, 2020

ATLANTA – Bob Cummings, senior director of Engineering and Reliability Initiatives, retired today from NERC following his distinguished career spanning more than 40 years at NERC and in the industry. He joined NERC in 1996 after almost two decades of grid planning and operations experience in the Eastern and Western Interconnections.

In his first few years at NERC, Cummings helped develop the now widely used practice of e-tagging to track the sources of bulk power system electrons and the developed the concept of an interchange distribution calculator to predict and control transmission congestion in the Eastern Interconnection.

At NERC, Cummings also led the investigation into the August 2003 Northeast Blackout. Cummings worked with experts from industry and government in the United States and Canada to produce the technical analysis supporting the *U.S.–Canada Power System Outage Task Force report*, which pointed out the need for mandatory and enforceable standards that could ensure the reliability of the bulk power system. Cummings participated in the dialogue that led the organization to call for mandatory, enforceable Reliability Standards in 1997. Following the 2003 blackout, Cummings created NERC’s System Protection and Control Task Force — NERC’s first effort in the critical reliability area of system protection.

He created and directed NERC’s Event Analysis program for five years, leading and working on 12 major bulk power system disturbance analyses. Cummings also was the principle investigator on the September 2011 Arizona–Southern California Outage and the Washington, D.C., Area Low-Voltage Disturbance Event of April 7, 2015.

Cummings was also active in a wide variety of Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) discussions to update IEEE standards to address reliability issues related to system protection and, more recently, incorporation of renewable resources.



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“Bob’s commitment and passion for bulk power system reliability has served as an inspiration for industry and the ERO Enterprise,” said Mark Lauby, NERC’s senior vice president and chief engineer. “His leadership has led to significant contributions helping to ensure the continued reliability of the bulk power system.”

In 2018, the Department of Energy (DOE) appointed Cummings to its Electricity Advisory Committee, which advises DOE on coordination with states and industry on electric reliability; coordination with federal agencies, state governments and industry for responding to emergencies affecting the reliability of the bulk power system and distribution system; future regional and national generation, transmission and distribution issues related to the capacity of the grid; and electricity policy issues.

“The rapid pace of change on the bulk power system — meaning the move from a fuel-diverse, central-station model with large reserve margins to a fast-ramping, tightly managed system consisting largely of natural gas and renewable resources — has been the greatest challenge and reward of my career,” Cummings said. “Addressing the reliability risks posed by today’s bulk power system paradigm requires more flexible resources and a more flexible engineering-based approach to planning and operations.”

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Electricity is a key component of the fabric of modern society and the Electric Reliability Organization Enterprise serves to strengthen that fabric. The vision for the ERO Enterprise, which is comprised of NERC and the six Regional Entities, is a highly reliable and secure North American bulk power system. Our mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid.