

Announcement

Workforce, Supply Chain Disruptions Key Elements in Ongoing Pandemic Preparations

April 23, 2020

ATLANTA – Potential workforce disruptions, supply chain interruptions and increased cyber security threats caused by COVID-19 have elevated the electric industry’s reliability risk profile. NERC’s special report — [Pandemic Preparedness and Operational Assessment – Spring 2020](#) — reviews reliability considerations and operational preparedness during this pandemic. The pandemic introduces significant uncertainty that is without precedent and highly challenging even for the most prepared of industries. However, industry is rising to the challenge, coordinating effectively with government partners and taking aggressive steps to confront these threats to grid reliability.

Currently, NERC has not identified any specific threat or degradation to the reliable operation of the bulk power system. However, as pandemic mitigation and containment strategies continue, prolonged periods of operator sequestration and deferred equipment maintenance increase industry’s risk profile and could exacerbate impacts to the bulk power system during the summer months, and potentially over the longer-term horizon.

“Industry appears well-positioned for spring operations and is currently preparing for the summer period, which we will focus on in our upcoming *Summer Reliability Assessment* next month,” said John Moura, director of Reliability Assessment and Performance Analysis. “While we have not identified any specific threat to the reliable operation of grid, we are in unprecedented territory and must continue to be prepared for the cumulative unknowns that are increasing industry’s risk profile.”

The Electric Reliability Organization (ERO) Enterprise, which is comprised of NERC and the six Regional Entities, is coordinating with registered entities, regulators and government officials to assure the reliability of the bulk power system during this challenging time. As the pandemic unfolds, the ERO Enterprise is pursuing all available avenues to continue this coordination and identify reliability implications

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and lessons learned. All Reliability Coordinators have implemented their pandemic plans.

Pandemic risk differs from many of the other threats facing the grid in that it is a “people event.” The fundamental risk is the loss of staff critical to operating and maintaining the bulk power system to the extent that firm loads could no longer be served safely. To both preserve bulk power system reliability and support the pandemic mitigation strategies, industry leaders are asking regulators and government agencies to take actions that include ensuring the following:

- COVID-19 testing is available and streamlined for essential personnel who work in shift environments (i.e., control center personnel)
- Relief from certain regulatory obligations is obtained to ensure the continued availability of control room operators
- Travel restrictions for the general public exclude personnel essential to the reliable operation of control centers
- Supplies for cleaning/hygiene are readily available

In addition, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the ERO Enterprise are using regulatory discretion to advise all registered entities that they will consider the impact of the coronavirus outbreak in complying with certain Reliability Standards.

NERC’s *2020 Summer Reliability Assessment*, to be published in May, will provide further detail on the availability of capacity resources, expected peak demands and any potential reliability issues during the upcoming summer period.

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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.