



NORTH AMERICAN ELECTRIC RELIABILITY COUNCIL

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NERC Affirms U.S.-Canada Power System Outage Task Force Findings

The North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) affirmed its full support for the findings of the interim report of the U.S.-Canada Power System Outage Task Force that was released today. NERC, along with some of North America's leading power system experts, assisted the task force with its investigation.

“The interim task force report completely and accurately describes the major events — electrical, computer, and human — leading up to the August 14 blackout, and identifies the causes of the blackout,” stated Michehl R. Gent, NERC President and CEO.

Central to the analysis of the blackout was the use of a root cause analysis. This process has been used in many industries ranging from food service to the space program to investigate and analyze complex system failures. “One of the great strengths and advantages of the root cause analysis,” Mr. Gent noted, “is that it acts as a filter to help eliminate conjecture, bias, and irrelevant facts from the investigation, and keeps the investigation focused on the facts and possible solutions stemming from the facts.”

According to Mr. Gent, the report also underscores the need for electric reliability legislation. “NERC and others in industry and government have been working for the last four years to convince Congress of the need to enact legislation that would make electric reliability standards mandatory and enforceable,” he said. “As unfortunate as the blackout was, our analysis indicates that it was also preventable and clearly demonstrates the immediate need for mandatory standards.”

NERC will work closely with the U.S.-Canada Power System Outage Task Force on the next phase of the investigation to fully understand and model the cascade phase of the blackout. NERC will continue to evaluate the root causes of the blackout and related system and operational deficiencies, and develop actions and recommendations to resolve them.

NERC's mission is to ensure that the bulk electric system in North America is reliable, adequate, and secure. Since its formation in 1968, NERC has operated successfully as a voluntary organization, relying on reciprocity, peer pressure, and the mutual self-interest of all those involved. Through this voluntary approach, NERC has helped to make the North American bulk electric system the most reliable system in the world. NERC membership comprises ten Regional Reliability Councils that account for virtually all the electricity supplied in the United States, Canada, and a portion of Baja California Norte, Mexico.