

NERC News

April 2019

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ERO Executive Spotlight – Bill Lawrence

The E-ISAC and Industry Engagement

The E-ISAC's [Long-Term Strategic Plan](#) emphasizes the importance of working side-by-side with industry experts to improve coordination on potential cyber and physical security threats to the operation of the bulk power system. To help foster and build on those relationships, the E-ISAC launched the Industry Engagement Program (IEP) in 2018. The IEP has provided the security community with a better understanding of E-ISAC capabilities and the E-ISAC with insights on industry needs. Since the program was created, more than 30 cyber and physical security experts from 24 North American electric companies have participated. Fortunately, for the E-ISAC and industry, IEP participation continues to grow.



IEP objectives include improving engagement with industry and increasing the exchange of information on potential cyber and physical security threats that could impact the reliability of the bulk power system in North America. IEP goals include raising awareness of the E-ISAC's cyber and physical security analysis processes, increasing opportunities for the E-ISAC to receive specific feedback from industry on tools and communications protocols and strengthening utility member programs and staff expertise.

Initially, the IEP was developed as a pilot program in partnership with the Large Public Power Council and its members. With the launch of the full IEP, each participant completes a three-day engagement at the E-ISAC in Washington, D.C.

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(Engagement cont'd)

During each IEP engagement, the E-ISAC and industry participants share how each organization collects and analyzes information for possible threat vectors and how each should rapidly share intelligence to mitigate threats. An added IEP benefit is fostering peer-to-peer collaboration among asset owners and operators who are members of the E-ISAC.

The E-ISAC shares information about its operations and provides industry participants with a first-hand appreciation of the E-ISAC's work processes, its procedures and controls for protecting sensitive information and its relationships with other ISACs and government agencies. The types of IEP information shared includes key aspects of the E-ISAC and NERC Codes of Conduct, cyber and physical security analysis, watch operations, business and decision-making processes and tools, including security bulletins and NERC alerts.

For their part, industry participants are expected to deliver presentations highlighting their security programs with a particular focus on information sharing and analysis. Hearing security program details from IEP participants provides E-ISAC staff with valuable insights on how the E-ISAC can improve its products and services to meet industry needs better.

As the cyber and physical security threat landscape evolves, the E-ISAC continues to improve its information-sharing system, building on the hard-earned trust from industry. The future electric grid will depend on all of us being more collaborative in information sharing, analysis and the communication of threats and mitigation measures. The E-ISAC, working together with members and partners, can make the bulk power system across North America more secure and resilient today and in the future. *Bill Lawrence is vice president, chief security officer and director of the E-ISAC.* ■■■

Headlines

Statement on FERC's April Open Meeting

FERC took action on an important item related to reliability at its open meeting on April 18. FERC issued a [notice of proposed rulemaking \(NOPR\)](#) proposing to approve Reliability Standard CIP-012-1 – Cyber Security – Communications between Control Centers. The proposed Reliability Standard addresses FERC's directive from [Order No. 822](#) to modify the Critical Infrastructure Protection Reliability Standards to require responsible entities to implement controls to protect communication links and sensitive Bulk Electric System data communicated between Bulk Electric System Control Centers. In addition to proposing to approve the standard, the NOPR proposes to direct NERC to develop and submit modifications to: (1) require protections regarding the availability of communication links and data communicated between Bulk Electric System Control Centers; and (2) clearly identify the types of data that must be protected.

NERC staff will continue to work with FERC and stakeholders toward assuring the reliability of the North American bulk power system.

Robb Encourages Stakeholders to Participate in GridEx (Video)

NERC's President and Chief Executive Officer Jim Robb stressed the importance of participation in NERC's grid security exercise, GridEx, in a recent video. The exercise, held every two years, continues to be a vital part of improving cyber and physical security preparedness to protect the bulk power system across North America. The exercise is scheduled for Nov. 13–14. [GridEx Video](#) | [Information on GridEx V](#) | [More Information on the E-ISAC or Becoming a Member](#) ■■■

Compliance

Compliance Guidance Update

A key factor in the success of compliance monitoring and enforcement of mandatory standards rests on a common understanding among industry and ERO Enterprise CMEP staff of how compliance can be achieved and demonstrated. For many standards, this is

straightforward. For others, a variety of approaches may achieve the same objective. Implementation Guidance is developed by industry, for industry and requires ERO-Enterprise endorsement. This guidance provides examples for implementing a standard.

One new CMEP practice guide—[ERO Enterprise CMEP Practice Guide: Implementation of “Annual” and “Calendar Month\(s\)” in the Reliability Standards](#)—has been posted on the [Compliance Guidance page](#). The practice guide provides clarity for ERO Enterprise CMEP staff to assess compliance regarding implementation of the terms “annual” and “calendar month” within the Reliability Standard requirements. NERC has incorporated previous guidance from Compliance Application Notice (CAN) – 0010: Implementation of “Annual” in Reliability Standard Requirements into this practice guide and intends on retiring the above-mentioned CAN.

Most calendar month requirements intend to ensure that entities perform a particular task on a regular basis, with an established maximum interval between the occasions when the entity performs the task. Overly long intervals affect the ability of the activity to protect reliability. This practice guide does not supersede or change any language contained in a standard.

One new proposed Implementation Guidance document—[CIP-013-1, R1, R2 – Supply Chain Management \(NATF\)](#)—has been posted. This posting is a revised version of a previously non-endorsed Implementation Guidance document.

Align Release 1 Functionality and Training Schedule Released

The Align project team is finalizing the construction and testing of Release 1 and getting ready to train the ERO Enterprise during summer 2019. Below is a summary of



functionality for each upcoming release.

The Regions have finalized their training schedules for their respective employees who will use the system for Release 1. You may [register](#) for your regional session starting May 1. After logging in, search for Align to see the list of available sessions.

Register for a session in your Region first. If you have scheduling issues and are not able to attend the sessions in your Region, you may sign up for a session in another Region. All sessions will have the same content. Registered entities will receive a training schedule from their respective Region separately.

Align Release 1 Trainings	
Region	Dates
NPCC	August 19
MRO	July 31 August 14
RF	August 7 August 20
SERC	August 6
Texas RE	August 5–6
WECC	September 3–4 October 3–4 (after go-live date)

Align Project FAQs

Many people have sent in questions about the Align project. Below is our first series of FAQs. These are available on the [Align project site](#).

Business Process Improvements

Q: How much consistency has been created as a result of the work on the Align project?

A: The Align project has created an opportunity for the ERO Enterprise to provide a consistent user experience for all Regions and registered entities. The project team conducted process harmonization workshops with representation from each Region, looking at all the CMEP business processes and identifying common ground and efficiency opportunities. As of Release 1, there were more than 30 process improvements identified for efficiency and commonality in the end-user experience.

Q: Will the Rules of Procedures change as a result of process harmonization?

A: The business process improvements identified for Release 1 provided an opportunity to identify potential updates to the Rules of Procedures. These updates were provided to the NERC Legal team for consideration. Not all of these changes would require changes to Align, but to the extent they do, and they are submitted to and approved by FERC, the Align software will be enhanced. Regions will be notified and trained on the updates. Release 1 will be launched with the functionality to support the Rules of Procedures, as they exist today.

Q: Will self-logging be impacted/accommodated in the new system?

A: Yes, self-logging functionality will be in Release 1 of Align. Rather than entering data into a spreadsheet and sending it to the Region, registered entities will enter self-logs directly into the Align system.

Q: Should we hold off on reporting new violations until the new system is available?

A: Entities should continue to report new violations in the current systems. The project team will make a decision regarding migration of those violations into Align closer to the launch date.

Q: Will entities be able to manage individual employee access without contacting NERC or their Region?

A: Yes, the ERO Enterprise has moved to a distributed administration model, where one or more “entity administrators” will manage access for that registered entity’s users via the ERO Portal. We use this same access management platform for the majority of our latest ERO Applications (e.g., TEAMS and MIDAS) and extranet sites. Registered entities will also use this system to manage access to the new CORES registration system.

Stakeholder Engagement

Q: Did NERC get input with regard to the entity experience before building the system?

A: Yes, NERC is engaged with the CCC’s Alignment Working Group to get feedback on what their experience will be. They have been shown screenshots of the system and will also be able to provide feedback during user acceptance testing.

Technology

Q: What is multi-factor authentication and how will it work?

A: Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is a method by which a user is required to present more than one factor in order to log into the system. When a user logs into the system, they will be required to provide a password, then the system will send a notification to the user’s phone or email address. Once a user acknowledges the notification, they will be logged into the system.

Q: Where will Align be hosted?

A: Align will be running on NERC-dedicated private (single-tenant) servers on hardware hosted by a fedRAMP-certified cloud services provider (CSP).

Q: Will there be an API to extract entity’s data so entities can generate their own trends?

A: The Align tool has robust reporting capabilities that allow users to export information from reports to perform external analysis. While we do not plan to give registered entities the ability to invoke API methods directly, we are exploring how to give registered entities the ability to create their own reports using their own data in the future. Prior to giving a user this capability, registered entities will need to take a training course on how to use the built-in reporting functions of the Align system. We will announce more about these features and others as the Align tool continues to mature.

Legacy Systems

Q: Will the Align tool replace the current systems (webCDMS, CITS and CRATS)?

A: Yes, the Align tool will replace these systems once all the planned releases are completed. This is planned for 2020. The business case for the project is based on sun setting these legacy systems to reduce the costs for the ERO Enterprise from supporting three systems to supporting one platform.

Q: What will happen to the historical data?

A: The current plan for historical data is two-fold: (1) migrate relevant historical data from the legacy systems into Align for analytical purposes, and (2) provide an “archive” of other data that can be referenced in the future. The details are still being developed.

Q: When will CITS/CDMS be retired and no longer used for accessing historical data?

A: Accessing historical data via the legacy systems is still in discussion. There is no date yet, but systems most likely will be up and available until sometime in 2020. Discussions are happening with the vendors of these systems (i.e., OATI and Guidance) to provide support for this transition.

Ongoing Support

Q: Who will provide technical support for the new tool once the project is completed?

A: The Align tool will be supported by NERC IT and the BWISE support team. NERC has signed a multi-year maintenance and support agreement with BWISE to ensure system availability and uptime and maintain the environment with up-to-date patches and security updates. The NERC IT team will support the Regions with requested enhancements, defect resolution and future releases.

Training

Q: Will I need to train my registered entities for Day 1?

A: Yes, registered entities should be trained to use the system on Day 1. The plan is to migrate the appropriate data and cut over from legacy systems to the Align tool on Day 1. From that point forward, the legacy systems will not be used for Release 1 functions. The project team is providing the training materials for the Regions to use to train their registered entities, and those trainings have been scheduled.

Q: If training starts in August but the launch is not until September, will users be training in a demo environment or the real environment?

A: NERC will conduct training in separate training environment that will simulate the production environment. The training system will have the same core functionality as the production system.

Change Management and Business Readiness

Q: What criteria will be used to determine whether the system is ready to go live in Q3?

A: Quality is foremost in the minds of the project team, and there are several pieces in place to ensure that. Namely this includes ongoing build reviews during construction, a tabletop exercise with the regional SMEs

to simulate the Day 1 experience and “go/no-go” criteria that focuses on the registered entity experience, regional experience and NERC (in that order). When making the decision to launch, the team will prioritize consideration of any impacts on registered entity staff first; then the impacts on Regional Entity staff; and lastly, the impact on NERC staff. ■■■

Standards

Resources Posted

NERC posted the [recording](#) and [slide presentation](#) for the March 21, 2019 Project 2018-03 – Standards Efficiency Review Retirements webinar. ■■■

Regional Entity Updates

A Month of Milestones at SERC

The past 30 days have been busy for SERC as they work toward integrating the SERC and FRCC Regions.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued an order on April 30 formally approving the transfer of all registered entities in the FRCC Region to SERC by July 1, 2019. Another important milestone in SERC’s transition efforts occurred in late April, with SERC’s Board of Directors meeting taking place in Tampa. SERC’s Board took significant actions that will be effective upon the formal transfer of the FRCC registered entities to SERC:

- Formally approved 26 new members from Florida.
- Added and elected three senior executives from current FRCC registered entities to join the SERC Board Executive Committee. This expansion of the Board Executive Committee helps ensure Florida representation and demonstrates SERC’s commitment, at all levels, to being a singular, inclusive and cohesive Region for entities across both the current SERC and FRCC footprints.
- Approved the submission of SERC’s draft 2020 Business Plan and Budget to NERC and its posting for comment.

The transition team from SERC and FRCC continue working to ensure a smooth and seamless transition.

Engagement has ranged from workshops in Florida and North Carolina to webinars, in-person meetings and conference calls. These engagements established open lines of communication for continued relationships with the newly expanded SERC Region.

While these critical milestones have been achieved, there is much work that remains to be done in the coming months. For more information, visit SERC's FRCC transition [web page](#). ■■■

Regional Entity Events

Midwest Reliability Organization (MRO)

- **CMEP Advisory Council Q2 WebEx**, May 9 | [Details](#)
- **Reliability Advisory Council Meeting**, May 21 | [Details](#)
- **MRO Reliability Conference**, May 22 | [Details](#)
- **Security Advisory Council Meeting**, June 19 | [Details](#)
- **Organizational Group Oversight Committee Meeting**, June 19 | [Details](#)
- **MRO Board of Directors Meeting**, June 20 | [Details](#)

Northeast Power Coordinating Council (NPCC)

- **2019 Spring Compliance and Standards Workshop**, May 22–23, Groton, Conn. | [Register](#)
- **2019 Fall Compliance and Standards Workshop**, November 20–21, Newport, R.I. | Details Coming Soon

ReliabilityFirst (RF)

- **Reliability and Compliance Open Forum Call Conference Call**, May 20 | [Details](#)
- **Short Circuit Data Modeling Workshop**, June 5, Independence, Ohio | [Details](#)
- **Reliability and Compliance Open Forum Call Conference Call**, June 17 | [Details](#)
- **Reliability and Compliance Open Forum Call Conference Call**, July 15 | [Details](#)
- **2019 Protection System Workshop**, August 13–14, Independence, Ohio | [Details](#)
- **2019 Human Performance Workshop**, August 14, Independence, Ohio | [Details](#)

- **Reliability and Compliance Open Forum Call Conference Call**, August 19 | [Details](#)
- **Reliability and Compliance Open Forum Call Conference Call**, September 16 | [Details](#)
- **2019 Fall Reliability and CIP Workshop**, October 1, Cleveland, Ohio | [Details](#)
- **Reliability and Compliance Open Forum Call Conference Call**, October 21 | [Details](#)

SERC Reliability Corporation

- **Open Forum Webinar**, May 6 | [Details](#)
- **Open Forum Webinar**, July 29 | [Details](#)
- **Align Training for Regional Entity Staff**, August 6 | [Details](#)
- **System Operator Conference**, August 27–29 | [Details](#)
- **CIP Compliance Seminar**, September 17–18 | [Details](#)
- **System Operator Conference**, September 24–26 | [Details](#)
- **Fall Compliance Seminar**, October 8–9 | [Details](#)

Texas RE

- **MRC, AG&F and Board Meetings**, May 15
- **Talk with Texas RE**, May 23 | [Register](#)
- **Talk with Texas RE**, June 20 | [Register](#)
- **Compliance 101 Workshop**, July 25 | [Details](#)

WECC

- **Board of Directors and Associated Meetings**, June 18–19 | Salt Lake City, Utah
- **Standards Committees Meeting**, June 25–27 | Salt Lake City, Utah ■■■

Upcoming Events

For a full accounting of NERC events, such as meetings and conference calls for standard drafting teams, other standing committees, subcommittees, task forces, and working groups, please refer to the [NERC calendar](#).

- **Board of Trustees, Board Committees and Member Representatives Committee Meetings** – May 8–9, St. Louis | [Register](#)
- **Operating Committee, Planning Committee, and Critical Infrastructure Protection**

Committee Meetings – June 4–5, Orlando, Fla. | [Register for OC](#) | [Register for PC](#) | [Register for CIPC](#) | [Register for Hotel](#)

- **Compliance and Certification Committee Meeting** – June 18–19, Chicago | Registration Details Coming Soon
- **NERC–NATF–EPRI 2019 Power System Modeling Conference Workshop** – June 18–19, Novi, Mich. | [Register](#)
- **2019 Industry Standards and Compliance Workshop** – July 23–24, 2019, Minneapolis, Minn. | [In-person Registration](#) | [Webinar Registration](#) | [Hotel Registration](#) ■■■

Filings

There were no NERC Filings to FERC in April.

There were no NERC Filings in Canada in April.



Careers at NERC

Cyber Analyst – Network Analyst

Location: Washington, DC

[Details](#)

E-ISAC Watch Officer – Open Source Intelligence

Location: Washington, DC

[Details](#) ■■■

NERC Articles

[A Secure, Resilient Energy Grid](#)

Electric Perspectives – March/April 2019

Jim Robb, president and chief executive officer

[Leveraging the Grid’s Human Vulnerabilities to Improve Reliability](#)

T&D World – April 2019

James Merlo, vice president and director of Reliability Risk Management ■■■