

SOCCED Continuing Education Hours

December 10, 2021

Background

In Q2 2021, NERC, the Personnel Certification Governance Committee (PCGC), and the Credential Maintenance Working Group (CMWG) became aware that there was an issue with how System Operator Certification Continuing Education Database (SOCCED) was calculating system operator Continuing Education Hours (CEHs).

The SOCCED system was rolling over more than the allowed 30 CEHs, Standards, and Simulation hours per certification period. The issue occurs when a system operator renews and subsequently completes course work *prior* to their expiration date. Those hours were being applied to their next credential period in error. Per the *System Operator Certification Program Manual*¹: *Chapter 2 Credential Maintenance, Rollover Hours*:

“For all credentials, some continuing education hours (CEHs) may be carried over to the next certification period. Up to 30 CEHs accumulated in the six months prior to the certificate expiration date that are not used for credential maintenance or change of credential type may be carried over. Categorization of CEHs in the “standards” category or the “simulation” category will not be carried over into the next period. To satisfy the CEH requirement, CEHs will be used starting with the first learning activity that occurred, according to the calendar, then sequentially by the date of the learning activities.”

Potential Issue

An incorrect number of rollover hours (operating, standards, and simulation CEHs) may be showing up in the current certification period of system operators. To resolve this issue, a software solution is needed to ensure that all hours are correctly calculated while not causing an undue burden to system operators renewing from the date the software solution is implemented through the end of 2023.

Update

We have been working closely with our SOCCED site vendor in order to implement a solution and alleviate the CEH issue. We initially expected a mid-October implementation date, however, due to the complexity of the issue and our desire to ensure any fixes made are correct and cause no unintended consequences, we have delayed this date.

Once the vendor implements the software solution, SOCCED will recalculate the operating, standards, and simulation hours for all affected active certificates. For affected certificates expiring between the time the software solution is implemented and the end of 2023, adjustment factors titled, *NERC_001 Adjustment Factor Disregard 2022* will be used to add back in any hours removed as a result of the recalculation.

¹ https://www.nerc.com/pa/Train/SysOpCert/System%20Operator%20Certification%20DL/SOC_Program_Manual.pdf

Given that system operators have been made aware of the issue and the amount of time remaining in their respective credential periods, no adjustments will be made to certificates expiring after 2023. Hardship appeals can be submitted to the PCGC.

Additional Findings

While troubleshooting the hour's calculation issue, it was discovered that in some instances system operators were not awarded rollover hours that should have been applied to their current credential period. The software solution referenced above will address this issue as well. Therefore, some system operators may see a net increase in their operating hours.

See next page for Frequently Asked Questions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How far back does the rollover hour issue go?

A: The issue may have affected transcripts of system operators that renewed since the transition to the current platform (2018).

Q: How does NERC plan to address the possibility that system operators may have recertified based on incorrect calculations without actually having earned enough CEHs to recertify?

A: Given that the scope of the issue was confined to the six month rollover allowance period prior to certification period. NERC and the PCGC determined that no additional action is needed.

Q: Will any system operators have their certifications suspended?

A: No, system operators will not have their certifications suspended due to the rollover issue.

Q: Will entities with system operators affected by this issue be adversely affected?

A: No, registered entities with system operators performing work related to PER-003-2 – Operating Personnel Credentials² will not be adversely affected.

Revision History

| Revision History | |
|------------------|---|
| Date | Revisions |
| 12/10/2021 | Entire document revised |
| 10/25/2021 | Updated first paragraph of 'Next Steps' |
| 8/28/2021 | Initial release |

² <https://www.nerc.com/layers/15/PrintStandard.aspx?standardnumber=PER-003-2&title=Operating%20Personnel%20Credentials&Jurisdiction=United%20States>