

Press Release

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CONTACT: [Kimberly Mielcarek](mailto:Kimberly.Mielcarek@nerc.gov)

202-383-2622

Cyber Attack Task Force Formed as Part of Coordinated Action Plan

WASHINGTON, DC – As part of its Coordinated Action Plan, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) announced that it has formed the Cyber Attack Task Force. The task force will consider the impacts of a coordinated cyber attack on the reliability of the bulk power system.

The task force will identify opportunities to enhance existing protection, resilience and recovery capabilities associated with power system operations practices, plans and procedures, as well as the tools and systems that operators rely upon to manage the reliable operation of the bulk power system. By developing flexible options, system operators will be better prepared to recognize an event and implement mitigation tactics they may include unique solutions not typical to daily operations.

The task force, which consists of more than 40 volunteers, is chaired by Mark Engels, director of Information Technology Risk Management at Dominion. Charles Abell, supervising engineer of Transmission Operations Technical Support at Ameren Corporation, will serve as vice chair. Solutions from the task force will be shared across the electric sector to be used by individual entities according to local circumstances.

“Operators are trained to spot anomalies and take the appropriate actions in real time,” Engels said. “The Cyber Attack Task Force will build on that existing knowledge with recommendations that make it easier to detect and respond to indicators of an organized attack.”

The Coordinated Action Plan was developed in response to recommendations from a June 2010 joint NERC and Department of Energy report - [High Impact, Low Frequency Event Risk to the North American Bulk Power System](#). The report found that the best approach to these events would be through an organized combination of industry-led task forces and NERC staff initiatives.

“NERC and the electricity industry have been actively addressing cybersecurity risks for some years now,” said Gerry Cauley, president and CEO of NERC. “This initiative will more thoroughly examine the potential impact of a targeted cyber attack and how the industry should best coordinate the preparedness and response actions of cyber security experts with power grid operators.”

Other task forces formed in response to the Coordinated Action Plan include the Geomagnetic Disturbance Task Force, the Spare Equipment Database Task Force, the Severe Impact Resilience Task Force and the Smart Grid Task Force. For more information on the task forces, visit NERC's website [Committee](#) page.

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The North American Electric Reliability Corporation's mission is to ensure the reliability of the North American bulk power system. NERC is the electric reliability organization (ERO) certified by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to establish and enforce reliability standards for the bulk-power system. NERC develops and enforces reliability standards; assesses adequacy annually via a 10-year forecast, and summer and winter forecasts; monitors the bulk power system; and educates, trains and certifies industry personnel. Learn more at www.nerc.com.