

Lesson Learned

Telecommunications — Music or Advertisement when on Hold

Primary Interest Groups

Balancing Authorities
Distribution Providers
Generator Operators
Load Serving Entities
Reliability Coordinators
Transmission Operators

Problem Statement

During a major system disturbance the reliability coordinator (RC) was not able to effectively communicate current system conditions and essential activities due to a sudden interruption of the call with music.

Details

Shortly after the major system disturbance occurred, the RC initiated a group hotline call with system operators and generator operators to discuss current system conditions and essential activities needed to stabilize frequency. Shortly after the call began one or more call participants placed their phones on hold; the phones were equipped with a “music on hold” feature. The music immediately disrupted the call, and the volume of the music made it difficult for the RC’s to discuss the emergency conditions with others on the call. This interruption continued until the callers came back on-line.

Lesson Learned

- Music/advertisement functions should be removed or disabled on all phones in Operational Control Centers (OCC). If that is not possible, it should be standard practice by personnel never to place hotline calls on hold; instead muting the call if an off-line conversation is needed.
- The courtesy of not putting conference calls on hold should also be extended to all group calls by all industry personnel if their phone systems have a music/advertisement feature when phones are placed on hold.

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