GridEx III Frequently Asked Questions

Why should utilities participate in GridEx III?
NERC’s grid security exercise (GridEx III) is designed for electric utilities to exercise their response to simulated coordinated cyber and physical security threats and incidents, strengthen utilities’ crisis communications relationships and provide input for lessons learned. GridEx III is a voluntary exercise that provides participants with the opportunity to play at the level of effort and resources that meet their own objectives consistent with the overall NERC scenario. GridEx III will help participants strengthen their capability to respond to and recover from severe events affecting the reliable operation of North America’s bulk power system.

Is there a risk that a utility could be found non-compliant with a NERC standard by participating in GridEx III?
As with previous NERC grid security exercises, GridEx III is solely an exercise and has no related compliance activities. GridEx III provides an opportunity for utilities to exercise their physical security and cybersecurity procedures in a learning environment.

How do utilities register for the exercise?
The Lead Planner identified by each utility is responsible for coordinating participation. Lead Planners may register all the individuals within their utility or allow these individuals to register themselves.

Can anyone participate GridEx III?
Only registered utilities can participate in GridEx III. The exercise is focused on security and operational response. No observers (other than utilities) or media will be allowed to participate.

How does a utility register for GridEx III?
There are two ways for organizations to register for GridEx III: as an active organization or as an observing organization. Active organizations participate in planning conferences, adapt scenarios to meet their local objectives, engage in crisis response and communicate externally to other exercise participants for information sharing and coordination. Observing organizations have access to all planning materials including the scenarios, do not communicate externally during the exercise and may choose to tabletop or discuss scenario events internally. Utilities have the flexibility to switch from observing to active (or vice versa) as they gain knowledge of how they might best participate and dedicate the appropriate resources. NERC will provide planning and support to encourage first-time participating utilities to participate as an Active organization.

How will organizations and individuals benefit by participating in GridEx III?
GridEx III will foster and enhance relationship building across the electricity industry and with public sector stakeholders, allowing organizations to fully execute their crisis response plans. Lead Planners will have the ability to customize scenarios to achieve their local organizational objectives.

NERC is planning for entity participants from active organizations to earn Continuing Education hours. CEH hours are required by a number of certification programs and NERC is working to ensure hours are granted.
for participating NERC certified operators, as well as those individuals with information technology and physical security industry certifications.

For active organizations (not observing organizations), GridEx III will provide utilities with the opportunity to exercise their processes that support:

- EOP-004 - Event Reporting
- EOP-008 - Loss of Control Center Functionality
- CIP-008 - Incident Reporting and Response Planning
- CIP-009 - Recovery Plans for Critical Cyber Assets
- OE-417 exercise reporting
- Exercising internal and external communications and notification processes

**How can individuals register for GridEx III?**

Individuals participating in GridEx III register in one of the following roles:

- **Lead Planner** – main point of contact for the organization; gathers support internally and invites external stakeholders; potentially leads the team of Planners in scenario development and inject customization. An interdepartmental team that crosses multiple functions would be optimal for active organization planning and participation.
- **Planner** – also involved in exercise planning with knowledge of the scenario
- **Player** – shielded from scenario knowledge; participate as if exercise events are real
- **Observer** – only gets limited visibility during the exercise of fake news broadcasts, crisis communication releases, and social media

**When is the deadline to register for GridEx III?**

Registration for GridEx III closes on November 2 to help ensure that all utilities have enough time to participate effectively. Lead Planners should register early to ensure they have enough time to participate in the planning and preparation process. Planning materials are available to give Lead Planners everything they might need to support their role in the exercise.

**Will NERC prepare a public report after GridEx III?**

NERC will prepare a summary report following the exercise that includes GridEx III key recommendations.

For more information on GridEx III, contact Bill Lawrence, senior manager of CIP awareness, Electricity Sector Information Sharing and Analysis Center.