Align Release Notes

Release 6.1.0
Date of Deployment: April 20, 2024

Background

Align and the Secure Evidence Locker (SEL) are tools used by NERC, Regional Entities, and registered entities in the conduct of the ERO Enterprise Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Program (CMEP). Initial training and training materials have been offered throughout the initial deployment of functionality (Releases 1, 2, 3, 4.0, and 4.5). Ongoing maintenance and enhancements to Align and the SEL (CMEP tools) will occur as needed to assure effective implementation of the CMEP. Maintenance may include modifications to correct existing objects, notifications, records, workflows, etc. Enhancements may include new or improved functionality, workflows, reports, etc. These changes are expected as these CMEP tools are adjusted from their initial deployment to provide additional user functionality, efficiency, and enhancements to usability.

Purpose

As changes are implemented to the CMEP tools, training and training materials provided during initial deployment may no longer be accurate. As part of an effective communication plan and to assure the effectiveness of user training, NERC is providing detailed release notes in this report. These release notes include detailed information regarding what features are changing or being added, what users are impacted by the changes, and if current training materials are impacted and have been updated. Users are encouraged to familiarize themselves with any changes that impact features or workflows regularly used.

Terminology

Ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the CMEP Tools is conducted using an adaptive and iterative software development process. Terminology used within this document may refer to various processes most users may be unfamiliar with.

CEA: Compliance Enforcement Authority

COP: Compliance Oversight Plan

IRA: Inherent Risk Assessment

Module: Used to refer to a set of features used within Align. As shown in *Figure 1*, each item that can be selected from the My Align drop-down menu is a Module. *Example: Risk and Planning*
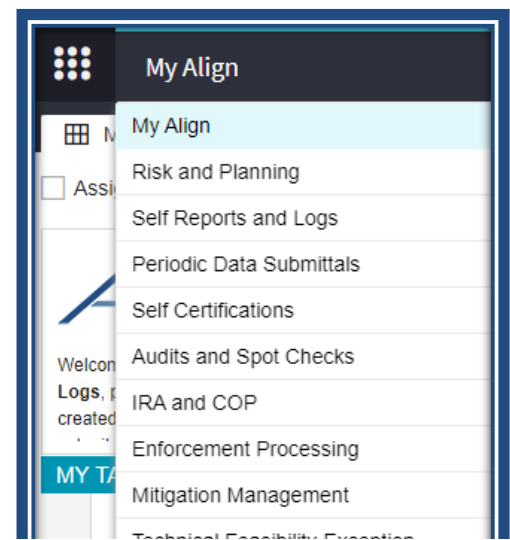

Figure 1: My Align Drop-Down Menu

User Story #: As shown in *Figure 2*, a unique number is used by the developers, NERC IT, and testers when referencing discrete changes. This number is used to aggregate all details, testing, and development information regarding a specific change. This number is not used by most CMEP tool users and users are not expected to become familiar or track these numbers. These numbers are provided for transparency purposes regarding changes and change controls. However, users may leverage these numbers to facilitate any follow up discussion, troubleshooting, testing, or IT support ticket details.
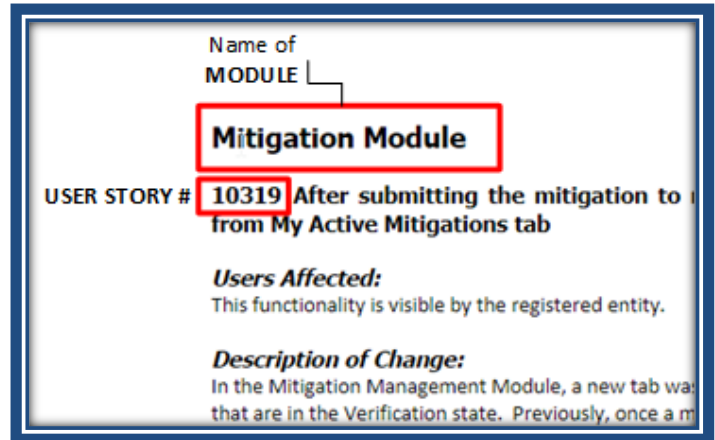
Figure 2: Elements of a User Story

Multiple Modules

User Stories # 18013, 20583, 20729, 20941, 21347, 21349, 21375, 21391, 21394, 21396, 21397, 21406, 21408, 21411, 21412, 21724

Description of Issue: Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI

Users Affected: CEA, Registered Entity

Description of Change: There were several issues identified related to the SEL Reference ID Paths generated in Align which would cause invalid SEL Reference IDs. Modules impacted include: Potential Noncompliance (PNC), Enforcement Actions (EA), Mitigation, Periodic Data Submittals (PDS), Self-Certifications, Technical Feasibility Exceptions (TFE), Requests for Information (RFI) in these modules. The invalid SEL Reference ID prevents an entity from submitting evidence in response to an activity without manually changing the SEL Reference ID. The generation of SEL Reference IDs in the impacted modules was corrected to ensure the required structure was followed. Some of the changes to the SEL Reference IDs include: removing extra spaces; removing the "-P" from the PNC objects; separating the Standard and Requirement/Parts into two different pipes; making sure the number of "|" in each path are correct; remove extra brackets "}"; correction to include the Audit Finding ID instead of the other finding ID; having the CEA or Lead Region listed as the first parameter instead of the Region jurisdiction.

Training Materials Modified: N/A

User Story # 7677

Description of Issue: RFI Email Trigger updates - SUBJECT LINE changes

Users Affected: CEA, Registered Entity

Description of Change: The RFI emails associated with Release 1 (PNC, Enforcement, and Mitigation) and Release 2 (Periodic Data Submittals, Self-Certification, and Technical Feasibility Exceptions) were updated to include the parent source ID and the RFI object ID in the subject line. This change will make it easier for the Registered Entity and CEA to quickly identify from which module the RFI was issued.

Training Materials Modified: N/A – This change was to the backend email triggers.

User Story # 17065[1]
Description of Issue: RFI Email Trigger updates - CONTENT changes

Users Affected: CEA, Registered Entity

Description of Change: The RFI emails associated with Release 1 (PNC, Enforcement, and Mitigation) and Release 2 (Periodic Data Submittals, Self-Certification, and Technical Feasibility Exceptions) were updated to include additional information in the content of each email. The body of the email includes the module the RFI was issued from, the parent source ID, and Standard/Requirement. This change will make it easier for the Registered Entity and CEA to understand from which module the RFI was issued, and the Standard/Requirement associated with the RFI.

Training Materials Modified: N/A – This change was to the backend email triggers.

User Story # 20921 and 21523[2]
Description of Issue: RFI emails not going to region and other entity contacts

Users Affected: CEA, Registered Entity, NERC

Description of Change: After the December 2023 RFI changes, the RFI recipient list for the new RFI email triggers were not updated to include all relevant recipients. This modification updates the email triggers to send RFI emails to PCC, ACC(s), CEA distribution list, and the Align log email.

Training Materials Modified: N/A – This functionality is specific to NERC administrative functionality to create new ERPQs for CEAs.

User Story # 22001
Description of Issue: A hotfix patch will be installed, which addresses known issues with filtering and sorting identified by users

Users Affected: All users

Description of Change: Details of the hotfix patch will not be detailed in these Release Notes. However, issues with filtering and searching will be resolved. If there are further questions, contact AskAlign@nerc.net.

Training Materials Modified: N/A

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[1] This user story was created from the following NERC Footprint support tickets: ERO-38133.
[2] These user stories were created from the following NERC Footprint support tickets: ERO-37240; ERO-37056; ERO-37629; ERO-3778; ERO-38722; ERO-39478; ERO-39884.

Inherent Risk Assessment (IRA) Module

User Story # 21036

Description of Issue: Entity Risk Profile Questionnaires (ERPQ) were updated for all regions, but upon updating the questions in the Align environment, completed questionnaires did not keep the original version of the questionnaire.

Users Affected: CEA, Registered Entity, NERC

Description of Change: To afford the ability to update ERPQs while keeping previous versions of the questionnaires for historical purposes, the ERPQs now have form versions which retain previous versions for any completed ERPQs. When questions are updated in the future, a new version will be created and questions updated.

Training Materials Modified: N/A – This functionality is specific to NERC administrative functionality to create new ERPQs for CEAs.

Appendix A – Table of User Stories

ID	Chapter	Title
18013	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
20583	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
20729	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
20941	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21347	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21349	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21375	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21391	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21394	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21396	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21397	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21406	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21408	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21411	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21412	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
21724	Multiple Modules	Various SEL Reference ID Path Corrections – PNC, EA, Mitigation, PDS, Self-Cert, TFE, RFI
7677	Multiple Modules	RFI Email Trigger updates - SUBJECT LINE changes
17065	Multiple Modules	RFI Email Trigger updates - CONTENT changes
20921	Multiple Modules	RFI emails not going to region and other entity contacts
21523	Multiple Modules	RFI emails not going to region and other entity contacts
22001	Multiple Modules	A hotfix patch will be installed, which addresses known issues with filtering and sorting identified by users

21036	Inherent Risk Assessment Module	Entity Risk Profile Questionnaires (ERPQ) were updated for all regions, but upon updating the questions in the Align environment, completed questionnaires did not keep the original version of the questionnaire

Appendix B – Revision History

Revision History		
Version	**Date**	**Revision Details**
1.0	4/12/2024	Initial Draft