

# Announcement

## 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Grid Security Conference Highlights Information Sharing, Names Inaugural Assante Security Service Award Recipients

October 20, 2021

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – A record number of attendees participated in the 10th annual security conference, GridSecCon, which took place October 19-20. More than 850 security experts from across North America attended the two-day conference to discuss the current grid security environment and the future of cyber and physical security. Hosted by NERC, the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center (E-ISAC), and the Texas Reliability Entity, Inc. (Texas RE), the conference focused on the most current compromises and emphasized the programs necessary to protect the grid from constantly changing cyber and physical security threats.

Manny Cancel, NERC senior vice president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the E-ISAC, opened the conference by acknowledging the volume, complexity and velocity of cyber and physical security threats impacting the electricity industry. He noted that the E-ISAC has seen a nearly nine-fold increase in ransomware shares via the E-ISAC's secure portal, indicating extraordinary escalation in a threat that has the capability to severely impact grid reliability.

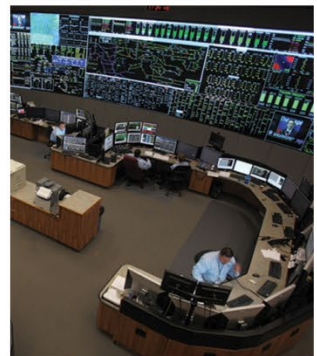
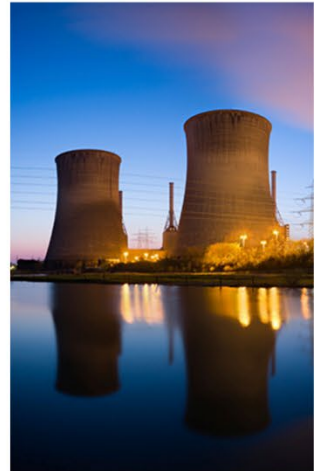
"From supply chain compromises to operational technology vulnerabilities, this trend shows no sign of subsiding," Cancel told participants. "Despite unprecedented new risks from aggressive nation-state threat actors, persistent domestic civil unrest, extreme weather, and evolving pandemic conditions, the E-ISAC team has kept its focus, allowing industry to maintain the level of situational awareness required to mitigate their exposure to these threats."

The second day of the conference opened with a [virtual conversation](#) between U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm and NERC President and CEO Jim Robb. Both discussed the criticality of a reliable and resilient bulk power system to the economy and quality of life and highlighted the Administration's 100-day plan and industry's positive response.

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Texas RE President and CEO Jim Albright remarked during his keynote that “keeping the lights on is vitally important work and all of us at Texas RE believe in what we do ... we’d much rather provide training and outreach that sets a registered entity up for success than find a noncompliance in an audit because compliance is not the end goal, a secure and reliable grid is.”

Other keynote speakers included:

- Bruce Walker, Head of Energy Risk Operations/Energy Chief Risk Officer, Analysis and Resilience Center for Systemic Risk
- Suzanne Spaulding, Senior Adviser, Homeland Security, International Security Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies
- Ed Amoroso, CEO and Founder, TAG Cyber LLC
- Tim Brown, CISO and Vice President, Security, SolarWinds

During the conference, breakout sessions focused on cyber defense for municipalities and co-ops, risk mitigation, the role of trade associations in cyber security, security threats from drones, supply chain lessons, insider threat programs, and industry diversity and inclusion. Prior to the start of the conference, a day of training sessions was offered that covered a range of topics, including operational cyber risk management, cyber physical grid training, a preview of SANS ICS 418, phishing simulation, 5G security, building an insider threat program, and supply chain management.

At the conclusion of the conference, the E-ISAC Electricity Security Service Award in honor of Michael J. Assante was awarded to **Marc Child**, information security program manager, Great River Energy; and **Mikhail Falkovich**, chief information security officer, Con Edison. Both award recipients received extraordinary nominations and have demonstrated a commitment to the industry, and are well-respected across companies, regions and internationally.

This inaugural award was established to recognize the security professionals who exemplify the ability to inspire, innovate, and care for the community as Assante did. He was instrumental in establishing the E-ISAC and served as NERC’s first chief security officer.

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*Electricity is a key component of the fabric of modern society and NERC, as the Electric Reliability Organization, serves to strengthen that fabric. The vision for the ERO Enterprise, which is comprised of NERC and the six Regional Entities, is a highly reliable and secure North American bulk power system. Our mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid.*