

Announcement

Grid Operators Well Prepared for COVID-19, Alert Responses Find

March 27, 2020

ATLANTA – Industry is well prepared and taking aggressive steps to confront the threat posed by the current pandemic, responses to NERC’s [Level 2 alert](#) showed. The alert, sent to industry on March 10, required industry to respond to NERC by March 20.

The vast majority of registered entities indicated that they either have a written pandemic response plan or are in the process of developing one in light of the COVID-19 crisis, an unprecedented event for bulk power system operators in North America. In addition, utilities responded to NERC’s Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center’s (E-ISAC’s) early February all-points bulletin and have reviewed their supply chains to develop plans to deal with potential equipment shortfalls.

Responses reflect industry attention toward potential vulnerabilities that could arise due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, NERC conducts a weekly situational awareness call with the continent’s Reliability Coordinators, who have generally activated their back-up control centers, isolated key workers and are maintaining a deep cleaning routine.

“The good news during this public health emergency is the fact that industry is prepared and has done its due diligence toward contingency planning in order to keep the lights on,” said Jim Robb, NERC’s president and chief executive officer. “Industry has come together to protect the health and well-being of their workforce while still being focused on providing customers with the electricity they rely on. Importantly, the majority responded that they will be able to support mutual aid, a key consideration as we move into the spring and summer storm season.”

Key takeaways from the alert include:

- Pandemic planning is pervasive across the registered entities.
- The majority of registered entities have reviewed pandemic staffing requirements.
- A large majority of registered entities have reviewed supply chain needs.
- More than half of registered entities said they would support mutual aid requests.
- Utilities identified risks such as staffing shortages, material shortages and the ability to complete major construction projects and maintenance turnarounds, which

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could lead to some constraints over the summer. All of this reinforces the need for continuous monitoring, planning and coordination.

NERC provided the report as an informational filing to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). NERC also is working on a more comprehensive assessment of potential reliability risks and considerations due to the unusual operating conditions presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The assessment targets pandemic preparedness and operational assessment of spring 2020 conditions and will also share lessons learned from system operators around the world, including Italy. The assessment is expected in April.

The report to FERC builds on a series of NERC and industry pandemic response actions. They include:

- NERC–FERC [guidance](#) to industry on ensuring grid reliability amid potential coronavirus impacts
- A public [Level 2 alert](#) on how industry can address potential coronavirus impacts
- An E-ISAC [Operations Summary](#), highlighting the E-ISAC's preparation and response to the COVID-19 outbreak
- Updated [Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council Resources](#), including a resource document, press release and frequently asked questions

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Electricity is a key component of the fabric of modern society and the Electric Reliability Organization Enterprise 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.