ERO Executive Spotlight – Jim Albright, President and Chief Executive Officer Texas Reliability, Inc.

The Future of Electric Reliability across the ERO

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Beginning February 13, a massive winter storm settled over the central United States and lingered for most of the next week. Texans experienced the harshest, most prolonged cold weather event most had ever seen. The event far surpassed previous benchmarks in our state in terms of how low the temperatures dropped and the number of hours in which temperatures remained below freezing. The impact the February freeze had on the Texas Interconnection was severe. Millions were without power or water for days. The destruction in terms of lives lost, injuries, or homes and business damaged is immense. All of us at Texas RE offer our deepest sympathies to those who have suffered due to the event. Continued on page 2

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At Texas RE, we intend to do everything we can to help ensure this sort of tragedy never happens again in Texas or any other state. NERC and FERC have begun an inquiry into operations of the Bulk Power System (BPS) during those extreme conditions with total support from Texas RE and the other Regions affected by the event. Our Reliability Services department is already collecting data to conduct event analyses. We have long encouraged Generator Owners and Operators at our annual Weatherization Workshops to implement weatherization best practices, but codifying some of these recommendations into requirements via Project 2019-06 – Cold Weather has renewed urgency.

The February event was a grim reminder of how critical it is to have a reliable BPS. Achieving reliability for something as large and complex as the North American BPS requires millions of hours of labor each year from staff at NERC, the Regional Entities, and registered entities. One of my key responsibilities during my 20-plus years working with the electric industry has been identifying and implementing processes and technologies to improve efficiency. I have been proud to chair the Steering Committee for the Align Project the last few years, which has been focused on creating standardization and efficiencies. After a long development cycle, I am pleased that the ERO Enterprise’s most ambitious project, Align, went live for both Texas RE and MRO on March 31. Developing and implementing Align took a tremendous amount of time and effort from stakeholders across the ERO Enterprise, but we are confident that the effort will pay dividends over the coming years through streamlined Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Program (CMEP) reporting across the Regions.

While we know we have a lot of work ahead of us, I am very optimistic about the future of electric reliability across the ERO. I am fortunate that my predecessor, Lane Lanford, did a tremendous job of building Texas RE into a well-respected and highly effective organization. It is my honor to continue that legacy and lead our incredible team of employees into the future.

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**Headlines**

**ERO Enterprise Launches Align Project and the ERO Secure Evidence Locker**

The ERO Enterprise is pleased to announce the Release 1 launch of the Align tool and the ERO Secure Evidence Locker (SEL) for MRO, NERC and Texas RE. The Align Project, formerly known as the CMEP Technology Project, is a culmination of strategic efforts that began in 2014 with the goal of improving and standardizing processes across the ERO Enterprise, enhancing the efficiency of ERO Enterprise operations and improving the effectiveness of executing statutory functions.

Align moves all compliance monitoring and enforcement business processes to a common standardized platform, resulting in a consistent application of the ERO Enterprise CMEP and a more secure method of managing CMEP evidence and data. The ERO SEL — a key component of the reimagined suite of CMEP work and data management tools — provides a secure, isolated environment to collect and protect compliance monitoring and enforcement evidence, significantly reducing risk of loss or exposure of evidence and harmonizing evidence collection processes.

“This is a giant step forward for consistency in our processes and security of the data we handle across the ERO Enterprise,” said Sonia Mendonca, NERC’s senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary. “The Align project team — made up of staff from across the ERO Enterprise — has dedicated years to this project and spent the balance of 2020 developing and testing the ERO SEL and preparing training materials. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished. Align will benefit all of industry and will enhance our CMEP efforts.”

Release 1 includes self-reporting/self-logging, enforcement processing and mitigation functionality in Align, as well as the use of the ERO SEL to collect registered entity-provided evidence as part of the ERO Enterprise’s CMEP activities. Subsequent releases will introduce new functionalities to the platform throughout.
2021. This initial launch marks an important milestone for the project, and the team will continue Release 1 deployment across the ERO Enterprise between March 31 and May 24, 2021.

The ERO Enterprise shares a collective mission and vision to assure the reliability, resilience and security of the North American bulk power system. The launch of Align and the ERO SEL are the next step in the highly cooperative, mission-driven relationship that has been forged between NERC and the Regional Entities, eliminating unwieldy processes and improving efficiency and effectiveness.

“The Align Project is the most ambitious undertaking that NERC and the Regional Entities have ever collectively taken on. The project was initially developed to address the challenges registered entities faced in utilizing multiple platforms for reporting across the ERO. Developing and implementing Align took a significant amount of time and effort from stakeholders across the ERO Enterprise, but I am confident that the effort will pay dividends over the coming years through streamlined CMEP reporting. I’d like to thank the members of the Align project team for their dedication and hard work, it has been an honor to be part of such a tremendous group,” said Jim Albright, chair of the Align Steering Committee and president and CEO of Texas RE.

The Align project team has developed numerous resources, including registered and Regional Entity newsletters, FAQs and webinars, which are available on the Align page. Additionally, the NERC Training Site contains all Align and ERO SEL training materials, including training videos, Start, Stop, Continue Guide, and Align and ERO SEL user guides.

Cummings Receives ESIG Lifetime Achievement Award
The Energy Systems Integration Group (ESIG) announced on March 25 that it presented an ESIG Lifetime Achievement Award to Bob Cummings, NERC’s former senior director of Engineering and Reliability Initiatives who retired in April 2020 following a distinguished career spanning more than 40 years at NERC and in the industry. Cummings received the award for major contributions in and dedication to the field of power system reliability.

“Bob’s passion for and commitment to BPS reliability has been an inspiration for industry and the ERO Enterprise for more than four decades,” said Mark Lauby, NERC’s senior vice president and chief engineer. “His leadership led to significant contributions helping to ensure the continued reliability of the BPS, and we want to thank ESIG for recognizing Bob with their Lifetime Achievement Award.”

These awards are presented to energy professionals from around the world for their contributions and accomplishments toward the planning and operation of energy systems across multiple pathways and geographical scales in ways that are reliable, economic and sustainable.

“Throughout my career, I have been a student of the system, letting it teach me how it can and will behave,” said Cummings. “In fostering reliability, I always tried to apply that knowledge, never asking the physics to change for me ... but to work for me.”

ESIG News Release

Robb Testifies at House Energy and Commerce Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Hearing
Jim Robb, president and CEO of NERC, testified at 11:30 a.m. Eastern on March 24 at the House Energy and Commerce Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing entitled, “Power Struggle: Examining the 2021 Texas Grid Failure.”

In addition to Robb, other witnesses included:

- The Honorable Sylvester Turner, mayor, City of Houston
- Bill Magness, president and CEO, Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT)
- The Honorable Christi Craddick, chair, Railroad Commission of Texas
- Michael Shellenberger, founder and president, Environmental Progress
Statement on FERC March Open Meeting Action
At its monthly open meeting, FERC approved NERC Reliability Standards CIP-013-2, CIP-005-7 and CIP-010-4, their associated implementation plans, violation risk factors and violation severity levels. FERC determined that NERC’s proposed modifications satisfy the directive issued in December 2020 in Order No. 850 to modify these Reliability Standards to include Electronic Access Control or Monitoring Systems as applicable systems. The Reliability Standards also address a recommendation from the NERC Cyber Security Supply Chain Risks Staff Report to include Physical Access Control System as applicable systems.

NERC Testifies at Senate Energy and Natural Resources Hearing
Jim Robb, president and CEO of NERC, testified at 10:00 a.m. Eastern on March 11 at the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee hearing. The hearing examined the reliability, resiliency and affordability of electric service in the United States amid the changing energy mix and extreme weather events.

In addition to Robb, other panelists included:

- Mark A. Gabriel, administrator and CEO, Western Area Power Administration
- The Honorable Pat Wood III, CEO, Hunt Energy Network, and former chair, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Michael Shellenberger, founder and president, Environmental Progress
- Manu Asthana, president and CEO, PJM Interconnection

NERC and NERC Host Webinar on Pandemic Planning and Response Activities
On March 17, the North American Transmission Forum (NATF) and NERC hosted a webinar about pandemic planning and response activities as well as resources available to industry. Opening remarks were provided by Commissioner Neil Chatterjee, FERC, Tom Galloway, president and CEO of NATF, and Manny Cancel, senior vice president of NERC and CEO of the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center (E-ISAC). The webinar featured presentations on pandemic activities from the following organizations:

- NATF
- NERC
- E-ISAC
- Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC)
- Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI)
- Directorate-General for Energy (DG-ENER)

Compliance

Compliance Guidance Update
A key factor in the success of compliance monitoring and enforcement of mandatory standards rests on a common understanding among industry and ERO Enterprise CMEP staff of how they can achieve and demonstrate compliance. For many standards, this is straightforward. For others, a variety of approaches may achieve the same objective. Industry develops Implementation Guidance, for industry, and the guidance requires ERO Enterprise endorsement. This guidance provides examples for implementing a standard.

The NERC Compliance Assurance department posted one new proposed Implementation Guidance document—CIP-005-6 R2.4 R2.5 Vendor Support via Web Conferencing (NATF)—to the Proposed Implementation Guidance section of the NERC Compliance Guidance web page.

They also updated the ERO Enterprise Non-Endorsed Implementation Guidance tracking spreadsheet to include the following:

- CIP-005-7 R3 Electronic Security Perimeters (2019-03 SDT)
- CIP-010-4 R1 Configuration Change Management and Vulnerability Assessments (2019-03 SDT)
ERO Enterprise Revised CIP Evidence Request Tool Version 5.0 Posted

NERC posted a revised ERO Enterprise CIP Evidence Request Tool (ERT), which is a common request for information tool for CIP Compliance monitoring engagements. The purpose of the CIP ERT is to help the ERO Enterprise with consistency and transparency in its audit approach. It will also help responsible entities (especially those that operate in multiple Regions) fulfill these requests more efficiently, by understanding what types of evidence are useful in preparation for an audit.

CMEP Practice Guides Posted

CMEP Practice Guides are developed solely by the ERO Enterprise to reflect the independent, objective professional judgment of ERO Enterprise CMEP staff, and, at times, may be initiated following policy discussions with industry stakeholders. Following development, CMEP Practice Guides are posted for transparency on the NERC website. For registered entities using this guidance as a reference, some aspects of the guidance may assist CMEP staff in determining compliance and some parts may assist CMEP staff in understanding registered entity’s risk mitigation activities. This understanding of risk mitigation may affect monitoring processes such as requests for information. In addition, the risk mitigation may adjust a registered entity’s compliance oversight plan.

Three new CMEP Practice Guides are now available on the Compliance Guidance page of NERC’s website under “CMEP Practice Guides.”

- **CMEP Practice Guide Virtual Systems** provides guidance to the ERO Enterprise CMEP staff when assessing a registered entity’s applicable systems that utilize virtualization.
- **CMEP Practice Guide Virtual Storage** provides guidance to the ERO Enterprise CMEP staff when assessing a registered entity’s applicable systems that utilize virtual storage.
- **CMEP Practice Guides Virtual Networks** provides guidance to the ERO Enterprise CMEP staff when assessing a registered entity’s applicable systems that utilize VLANs.

Contact Role Functionality Enabled in CORES

The ERO Enterprise enabled functionality in the Centralized Organization Registration ERO System (CORES) allowing Registered Entities to make changes to their Registered Entity Contact Roles directly in CORES. Effective March 8, 2021, Contact Role functionality became available for immediate use. Some release notes are below:

- Contacts are now called Contact Roles.
- Contact Role updates are now activated.
- The number of records in the UI view is increased.
- The fields in the view are organized in a more logical order.
- UI improvements were made for creating Contact Roles.
- A deactivated Contact Role history view was added.
- Description links added for updating Profile, Application Requests, and Managing Entity Permissions.

By enabling this additional functionality, CORES will ultimately become the official system of record for registered entities to maintain their contact information. It is essential to keep current and accurate Registered Entity Contact Roles in CORES because the data will be needed in the Align tool. The ERO Enterprise will continue to operate in both the legacy systems (CDMS, CDAA, and the SERC Compliance & Committee Portal) and the ERO Portal with CORES until the transition to Align is completed. While there have been substantial checks made to ensure accuracy, it will be up to the registered entities to verify their current Contact Roles and update any new changes to Contact Roles, as needed in both CORES and legacy systems. To assist with updating Contact Roles, please refer to the instructions included in the CORES User Guide or watch the CORES training videos for “My Entity” Contacts. If you have any additional questions, please contact your Region or submit a Help Desk ticket.

Reliability Standard Audit Worksheets Posted

NERC posted thirteen new Reliability Standard Audit Worksheets (RSAWs) to the RSAW page under the heading “Current RSAWs for Use.”
There is one new RSAW—PER-006-1 – Specific Training for Personnel—that applies to Generator Operators with an effective date of April 1, 2021.

There are seven RSAWs for new standards that contain no change except for registration language (removing LSE, adding UFLS only DP, etc.). More information is available on this project page.

- FAC-002-3
- IRO-010-3
- MOD-031-3
- MOD-033-2
- NUC-001-4
- PRC-006-5
- TOP-003-4

There are five RSAWs for new Standards that contain no change except for requirement removals per Standard Efficiency Review. More information is available on this project page.

- INT-006-5
- INT-009-3
- IRO-002-7
- PRC-004-6
- TOP-001-5

**Newly Effective Standards**

The following standards became effective on April 1, 2021:

- FAC-002-3 – Facility Interconnection Studies
- INT-006-5 – Evaluation of Interchange Transactions
- INT-009-3 – Implementation of Interchange
- IRO-002-7 – Reliability Coordination – Monitoring and Analysis
- IRO-010-3 – Reliability Coordinator Data Specification and Collection
- MOD-031-3 – Demand and Energy Data
- MOD-033-2 – Steady-State and Dynamic System Model Validation
- NUC-001-4 – Nuclear Plant Interface Coordination
- PER-006-1 – Specific Training for Personnel
- PRC-004-6 – Protection System Misoperation Identification and Correction
- PRC-006-5 – Automatic Underfrequency Load Shedding
- PRC-027-1 – Coordination of Protection Systems for Performance During Faults
- TOP-001-5 – Transmission Operations
- TOP-003-4 – Operational Reliability Data

**Program Alignment Update**

NERC resolved an alleged alignment issue pertaining to the assessment criteria for TOP-001-3 R9. NERC conducted a process review for evidence requests when auditing TOP-001-4 R9 with the Regional Entity involved and found that the processes align with SDT’s response to comments and are similar across all Regions.

The ERO Enterprise Program Alignment Process is intended to enhance efforts to identify, prioritize, and resolve alignment issues across the ERO Enterprise. Using this process, NERC captures identified issues from the various resources in a centralized repository. The Consistency Reporting Tool uses a third-party application, EthicsPoint, which allows stakeholders to submit consistency issues—anonymously, if desired.

**Reliability Risk Management**

**Save the Date for Human Performance in Electric Power Virtual Sessions**

Please save the date and join us on May 6, 2021 from 1:00–5:00 p.m. Eastern for our Human Performance in Electric Power virtual sessions. This collaboration between the ERO Enterprise, the Human Performance Community of Practice (KnowledgeVine and ResilientGrid) and their mutual partners brings together industry representatives and subject matter experts from across the country to share ideas and transfer knowledge about human performance topics/principles and their application in electric power organizations.

We are planning three additional sessions tentatively scheduled for July 15, October 21 and December 2, 2021 from 1:00–5:00 p.m. Eastern. Pencil those dates into your calendar and plan to join us as we cover a variety of
exciting topics by the community’s top subject matter experts. It is a great opportunity to learn and share ideas! Registration details for each session will be sent out in the next few weeks.

Reliability Guidelines Posted
The NERC Reliability and Security Technical Committee (RSTC) approved two Reliability Guidelines at their March 2021 meeting:

- **Reliability Guideline: Model Verification of Aggregate DER Models used in Planning Studies**: Areas across the North American BPS are experiencing increasing penetration levels of distributed energy resources (DERs). BPS disturbance events analyzed by NERC in 2018 and 2020 have highlighted the impacts that DERs are having on BPS performance. Transmission Planners (TPs) and Planning Coordinators (PCs) are faced with ensuring the planning assessments capture the aggregate behavior of DERs in both their steady-state and dynamic studies. This guideline provides TPs and PCs with tools and techniques that can be adapted for their specific systems to verify that the aggregate DER models created are a suitable representation of these resources in planning assessments.

- **Reliability Guideline: Performance, Modeling and Simulations of BPS-Connected Battery Energy Storage Systems and Hybrid Power Plants**: Transmission interconnection queues across North America are seeing a rapid influx of requests for battery energy storage systems (BESSs) and hybrid power plants, particularly resources combining BESS technology with inverter-based resources such as wind and solar photovoltaic generating components. This guideline provides recommended performance characteristic for BPS-connected BESSs and hybrid plants that all Generator Owners (GOs) and project developers seeking interconnection to the BPS should consider. Transmission Owners (TOs), TPs and PCs are recommended to improve their interconnection requirements and study processes for these relatively newer technologies. This guideline also covers recommended modeling and study practices that should be considered by TPs and PCs as they perform planning assessments with increasing numbers of BESSs and hybrid power plants during interconnection studies, annual planning assessments and any specialized studies needed to ensure BPS reliability.

Standards
With the implementation of the Align Project in 2021, there will be changes to the Reliability Standards web page and associated reports, including the One-Stop Shop, U.S. Effective Date Status/Functional Applicability spreadsheet and VRF and VSL matrices. More details will be provided in the coming months.

Webinar Resources Posted
NERC posted the slide presentation and recording for the February 25 Project 2019-06 – Cold Weather Industry webinar.

NERC posted the slide presentation and recording for the March 3 Project 2016-02 – Modifications to CIP Standards Outreach webinar.

Project 2019-05 Update
Project 2019-05 – Modifications to PER-003-2 will revise PER-003-2 to address that one credential is required, not the current four credentials. This better serves reliability by ensuring all system operators, regardless of their company’s registration or credential of choice, have the same base knowledge. In order to inform drafting of the standard, the Personnel Certification Governance Committee, in conjunction with the Credential Maintenance Working Group, have formed a task force to investigate the potential impacts of these changes. The project is on hold until further notice.
Nomination Period Open for Project 2021-03 – CIP-002 Transmission Owner Control Centers

NERC is seeking standard drafting team (SDT) nominations for Project 2021-03 – CIP-002 Transmission Owner Control Centers (TOCC) through April 20, 2021. The time commitment is expected to be significant. Participants should anticipate an average workload of 15 hours per week devoted to drafting team efforts. There will be up to two virtual meetings weekly with additional virtual meetings scheduled as needed to meet the agreed-upon timeline the review or drafting team sets forth. Team members may also have side projects, either individually or by subgroup, to present to the larger team for discussion and review. Lastly, an important component of the review and drafting team effort is outreach. Members of the team will be expected to conduct industry outreach during the development process to support a successful project outcome. Previous SDT experience is beneficial but not required.

Use the electronic form to submit a nomination. Contact Linda Jenkins regarding issues using the electronic form. An unofficial Word version of the nomination form is posted on the Standard Drafting Team Vacancies page and the project page. By submitting a nomination form, you are indicating your willingness and agreement to participate actively in face-to-face meetings and conference calls. The Standards Committee (SC) is expected to appoint members to the SDT in May 2021. Nominees will be notified shortly after they have been appointed.

Notice of Request to Waive the Standard Process by Action without a Meeting
As required by Section 16 of the NERC Standard Processes Manual (SPM), please take notice that the leadership of the Project 2019-06 – Cold Weather SDT and NERC Standards staff (Requesters) are requesting that the SC consider a waiver of the SPM. The Requesters ask to shorten the next formal comment and ballot period(s) for draft standards EOP-011-2, IRO-010-4 and TOP-003-5, and any subsequent formal comment and ballot periods prior to final ballot for those standards, from 45 days to 25 days, with a ballot and non-binding poll during the last 10 days of the 25-day period. The Requesters seek this waiver in order to meet a June 2021 project deadline set by the NERC Board of Trustees (Board) on March 22, 2021. Section 16 of the SPM provides that a waiver may be granted where necessary to meet deadlines imposed by the Board. The SC will consider this waiver by Action without a Meeting, conducted in accordance with Section 8.8 of the Standards Committee Charter, on March 29, 2021. The results of the vote, along with any approved waiver, shall be posted to the NERC website as provided in the SPM and the SC Charter.

Regional Entity Events

Northeast Power Coordinating Council, Inc. (NPCC)
- Align/SEL Release 1 Training for Stakeholders, April 8
- Spring 2021 Compliance and Reliability Webinar, May 19

ReliabilityFirst (RF)
- Technical Talk with RF, April 19
- Registered Entity Align and ERO SEL Training, April 20
- Registered Entity Align and ERO SEL Training, April 28
- 2021 Enforcement Updates and Trends Webinar, April 29

SERC Reliability Corporation
- System Operator Conference #1, April 6–7
- System Operator Conference #2, April 27–28

Texas RE
- Talk with Texas RE – New Entity Self-Certifications, April 1
- Talk with Texas RE - Three Practical Strategies for Improving Safety, Reliability, and Human Performance, April 8
- Talk with Texas RE – Registration and Certification Updates, April 15
- Spring Standards and Compliance Workshop, April 22
- Talk with Texas RE – FERC Update, April 29
- Talk with Texas RE – Align Update, May 11
- Talk with Texas RE – Summer Outlook, May 27
Upcoming Events

For a full accounting of NERC events, such as meetings and conference calls for standard drafting teams, other standing committees, subcommittees, task forces, and working groups, please refer to the NERC calendar.

- **DOE Wildfire Mitigation Webinar Series:** Sensing & Detection | Fire Testing Capabilities – 2:00–4:00 p.m. Eastern, April 8, 2021 | Register
- **Reliability Issues Steering Committee Meeting** – 1:00–2:00 p.m. Eastern, April 8, 2021 | Register
- **Member Representatives Committee Pre-Meeting Conference Call and Informational Webinar** – 11:00–12:00 p.m. Eastern, April 14, 2021 | Register
- **DOE Wildfire Mitigation Webinar Series:** Situational Awareness – 2:00–4:00 p.m. Eastern, April 22, 2021 | Register
- **DOE Wildfire Mitigation Webinar Series:** Modeling & Analytical Tools | Post Fire Analysis – 2:00–4:00 p.m. Eastern, April 29, 2021 | Register
- **Human Performance in Electric Power Virtual Session** – 1:00–5:00 p.m. Eastern, May 6, 2021 | SAVE THE DATE
- **Board of Trustees, Board Committees, and Member Representatives Committee Meetings** – May 12–13, 2021 | Register | Schedule of Events

Filings

**NERC Filings to FERC in March**

*March 1, 2021*

Comments of NERC and the Regional Entities on NOPR | NERC and the Regional Entities submit comments on a NOPR proposal to revise FERC regulations regarding performance assessments of the ERO.

*March 15, 2021*

CIP SDT Schedule March Update Informational Filing | NERC submits to FERC an information compliance filing as directed by FERC in its February 20, 2020 Order. This filing contains a status update on two standards development projects relating to CIP Reliability Standards.

*March 22, 2021*

Comments of NERC on NOPR | NERC submits comments on FERC’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding Managing Transmission Line Ratings.

*March 29, 2021*


There were no NERC Canadian Filings to FERC in March.

**Careers at NERC**

**Director, Corporate Compliance CRM and Ethics**
Location: Atlanta
[Details]

**BPS Cyber Security Specialist**
Location: Atlanta
[Details]

**Senior Engineer or Advisor, Performance Analysis**
Location: Atlanta
[Details]

**System Administrator**
Location: Atlanta
[Details]

**Senior Network Administrator**
Location: Atlanta
[Details]

**Senior Cyber Security Analyst**
Location: Atlanta
[Details]