

Standards Announcement

Project 2007-02 – Operating Personnel Communications Protocols White Paper on Operating Communications Protocols now Posted

[Now Available](#)

A white paper on Operating Communications protocols has been posted with the clean version COM-003-1 – Operating Personnel Communications Protocols that has been posted for a 45-day formal comment period, initial ballot and non-binding poll. The drafting team prepared this white paper to aid in the evaluation of proposed COM-003-1 and the associated proposed definition of Operating Communication.

Background

NERC Project 2007-02 was created from the 2003 Blackout Report, Recommendation 26. In April 2004, the “Blackout Report” was submitted to the President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister of Canada.

The Blackout Report stated that:

“Ineffective communications contributed to a lack of situational awareness and precluded effective actions to prevent the cascade. Consistent application of effective communications protocols, particularly during alerts and emergencies, is essential to reliability.”

The report also recommended that industry,

“Tighten communications protocols, especially for communications during alerts and emergencies. Upgrade communication system hardware where appropriate.”

FERC Order No. 693, Paragraph 532 directs the ERO and the industry to develop communication protocols based on the following guidelines:

“532. While we agree with EEI that EOP-001-0, Requirement R4.1 requires communications protocols to be used during emergencies, we believe, and the ERO agrees, that the communications protocols need to be tightened to ensure Reliable Operation of the Bulk-Power System. We also believe an integral component in tightening the protocols is to establish communication uniformity as much as practical on a continent-wide basis. This will eliminate possible ambiguities in communications during normal, alert and emergency conditions. This is important because the Bulk- Power System is so tightly interconnected that System impacts often cross several operating entities’ areas.”

The purpose of the white paper is to establish the reliability value of requiring three-part communication for all operations on the BES described in the proposed definition of COM-003 -1 “Operating Communication.” Additionally, it addresses the reliability benefit of other communication protocols featured in COM 003-1 that provide addition clarity for “Operating Communication.”

The requirements in COM-003-1 also support one of the eight high priority issues identified in the NERC President’s Top Priority Issues for BPS Reliability Issued January 7, 2011:

Ambiguous or incomplete voice communications – Out of longstanding tradition, system operators and reliability coordinators are comfortable with informal communications with field and power plant personnel and neighboring systems. Experience from analyzing various events indicates there is often a sense of awkwardness when personnel transition from conversational discussion to issuing reliability instructions. It is also human nature to be uncomfortable in applying formal communication procedures after personnel have developed informal styles over many years. Confusion in making the transition from normal conversation to formal communications can introduce misunderstandings and possibly even incorrect actions or assumptions. Further, once the need to transition to more formal structure is recognized, the transition is often not complete or effective. Results can include unclear instructions, confusion whether an instruction is a suggestion or a directive, whether specific action is required or a set of alternative actions are permissible, and confusion over what elements of the system are being addressed.

The drafting team is in the process of preparing for a webinar on the proposed COM-003-1. The webinar is scheduled to be held on Thursday June 7, 2012 from 1:30—3:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. An announcement for the webinar with additional details is forthcoming.

Standards Development Process

The [Standard Processes Manual](#) contains all the procedures governing the standards development process. The success of the NERC standards development process depends on stakeholder participation. We extend our thanks to all those who participate. For more information or assistance, please contact Monica Benson at monica.benson@nerc.net.

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