

Media Release

Operational Communication, Collaboration and Coordination Key to Industry Success during an Event

April 7, 2022

WASHINGTON D.C. – Enhancing routine and emergency operations coordination between the electricity industry and natural gas providers is one of several recommendations identified during NERC and the Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center’s (E-ISAC) sixth security exercise, GridEx VI, held in November 2021.

The [GridEx VI Lessons Learned Report](#), which was published today, is a detailed post-exercise review and analysis that provides recommendations for actions by the electricity industry, cross-sector partners and government.

Participants from across North America – including industry, and U.S. and Canadian government partners – took part in the two-day exercise, which tested the operational and policy measures that would be needed to restore the grid following a severe cyber and physical attack.

“Exercising emergency response preparedness on this scale is a tremendous undertaking by industry and government partners. Given the current geopolitical climate, it is even more imperative that emergency plans are practiced and that the subsequent recommendations are implemented,” said Manny Cancel, NERC senior vice president and chief executive officer of the E-ISAC. “Expanding the reach of the exercise was a key recommendation arising from GridEx V. Our recent exercise was further enhanced by the presence of our Canadian partners as well as other critical infrastructure partners from telecommunications, water and gas sectors.”

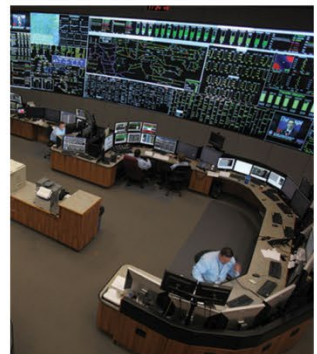
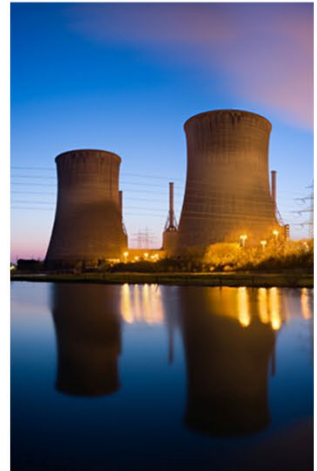
Communications, collaboration and coordination are among many policy recommendations highlighted as being key to industry’s success during a severe security event. Those recommendations include:

- **Continue to build effective communications procedures and systems to share operational and security information.** The scenario presented conditions that strained industry’s ability to communicate operational status to external stakeholders, highlighting the need to enhance processes and procedures around communications roles and responsibilities.

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In addition, the report found that Federal government mechanisms to share potentially sensitive security information are challenging during normal conditions. Greater mutual understanding of what information would be shared and how will start to address this concern.

- **Clarify the differing crisis communications roles of the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council and Reliability Coordinators (RC) with government and their members, including Canadian members.** The scenario introduced a level of crisis communication not needed since the 2003 Northeast Blackout; RCs and utilities would be responsible for ensuring timely and effective communication and action.
- **Continue to enhance routine and emergency operations coordination between the electricity industry and natural gas providers.** Cross-sector participation, which was a recommendation from GridEx V, greatly enhanced the exercise and associated policy discussions.
- **Strengthen operational coordination between the electricity industry and communications providers.** The scenario featured a widespread loss of telecommunications during the recovery phase; participants agreed that industry should consider technical alternatives in case of telecommunications disruptions.
- **Continue to reinforce government relationships between United States and Canada to support industry response.** The participation of senior Canadian federal and provincial officials reflected the cross-border scope of the scenario. Participants gained a better understanding of the roles of Canada's provincial and federal governments during a grid emergency and how they differ from those of their U.S. counterparts.

NERC and the E-ISAC are committed to continue enhancing the GridEx program to meet the challenges posed by the ever-evolving threat environment and will incorporate the recommendations arising from the report into the planning process for GridEx VII in 2023.

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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.