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Regional Focus Throughout 2022

In 2021, North America's electric grid experienced many challenges. We faced extreme weather events, heightened security risks and a global pandemic while at the same time navigating the complex and rapid evolution of the grid itself. I have always felt that challenges bring opportunities, and I am quite proud of how, I believe, NERC and the Regions leaned into these challenges throughout 2021. With our shared commitment to ensure our work always starts with our "why" — that is, reducing risks to



the reliability and security of the grid — we were able to more quickly align and accept these challenges as powerful opportunities to make a positive difference to help industry and federal, provincial and state policymakers understand and maneuver through this dynamic landscape.

While I believe there are more maturation and growth opportunities for NERC and the Regions, I also think it is important to reflect on all that we have accomplished toward our collective mission. To that end, I suggest checking out NERC's <u>2021</u> <u>Annual Report</u>, which provides a nice summation of the ground NERC and the Regions covered in 2021. *Continued on page 2*

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NERC

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2022 and Beyond

Of course, the challenges and evolving landscape will not slow in 2022, and we must all continue to push and align ourselves, our skillsets and our collective efforts to make sure we are all best positioned to understand and address the many unfolding challenges that await us. As Jim Robb regularly says, "400 million people across North America are depending upon us." And during this quarter's NERC Board of Trustees meeting, Jim did an excellent job explaining that focus for 2022 and beyond. These areas include:

1) Resolving the energy availability challenges we have witnessed as a result of grid transformation and extreme weather events (both in longer term and operating time frames);

2) Moving the needle on security (especially supply chain vulnerabilities) by ensuring the three-legged stool of the E-ISAC, cyber engineering and Reliability Standards collectively address security risks facing industry;

3) Improving agility along with continued focus on efficiency and effectiveness (with a near-term focus on Reliability Standards and financial management processes); and

4) Investing in the Enterprise's institutional sustainability (the security of our systems, reducing single points of failure, institutionalizing processes and reducing reliance on people-based processes).

The Regions will further this effort across our respective footprints by utilizing our various tools, programs, forums and stakeholder committees. Within these efforts, I would like to share a few areas where I anticipate you will see significant regional focus throughout 2022.

Cyber Security (External and Internal)

As no surprise, cyber security will remain a major focus area for the Regions, and I see two facets to this work. The first is working with our stakeholders, via our various programs, to ensure that the industry is staying on top of known risks with proven mitigation strategies, while also analyzing and understanding the emerging risks and developing ways to mitigate them. The second facet is the Regions continuing to strengthen our internal security programs to safeguard our critical data. Just like industry, the Regions cannot be passive because our shared adversaries are not tiring and are only becoming more sophisticated. As a result, we must continue to enhance our security prowess, and we are committed to doing so.

Changed and Changing Resource Mix

The grid has evolved and continues to do so. With the widespread integration of renewables and simultaneous transition away from coal to gas, we must make sure that we are working closely with industry and policymakers to understand the realities before us. Fundamental assumptions on how to plan and operate the grid are being revisited as new and different limitations and capabilities are being rapidly introduced as the result of the differing nature and location of the resource mix.

The Regions will continue to work closely with our stakeholders — via our various committees, forums and programs — to study and understand strategies to address these challenges within our respective footprints. These lessons will then be shared across NERC, the other Regions and industry to drive alignment and a shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges.

State Outreach

While it is important to understand the opportunities and challenges associated with the changing resource mix, it is equally important that we share our understanding with policymakers. State legislatures and utility commissions are grappling with complex decision-making with potential reliability implications. The Regions are well positioned to serve as an objective, credible and independent resource on the potential reliability implications of contemplated policy decisions. This will support state legislatures and utility commissions in their effort to make the best-informed decisions possible.

Facility Ratings

While the nature of the grid has and continues to evolve, and how it is planned and operated continues to change, it is important to maintain an accurate understanding of the underlying capabilities and limitations of the actual equipment and facilities that constitute the grid. Consequently, NERC and the Regions will continue to work with industry to help ensure stakeholders maintain a strong and accurate understanding of their respective Facility Ratings. I am pleased that this work to date has been risk-based with our collective understanding that not all Facility Ratings deviations are equal; and that mitigation is necessarily time- and resource-intensive and should be thoughtfully deployed around risk. I am equally pleased to see the commitment to share with stakeholders the common themes and trends that create programmatic challenges to ensuring accurate Facility Ratings. At the end of the day, it is all about preventing risks from occurring, and I believe that the Regions' proactive outreach and training programs are some of the most effective and efficient tools to mitigate risks.

This outreach also includes a commitment to strengthen external partnerships across the reliability ecosystem to help mitigate identified themes, trends and common risks. In this context, NERC and the Regions continue to partner with the North American Transmission Forum, which, in turn, created a useful maturity model for its transmission membership, to help them drive sustainable and continuously improving Facility Rating programs.

This is an exciting time to have the opportunity to work within this essential industry. There are many challenges and opportunities before us, and I look forward to seeing how we all continue to rise up together to meet these challenges and maximize the many opportunities.

Headlines

Statement in Response to Grid Vulnerability

Grid security efforts are just one piece of the multipronged approach NERC takes in its daily mission to assure the reliability, resilience and security of the North American bulk power system. Most importantly, the electricity industry is the only critical infrastructure to have mandatory and enforceable Reliability Standards. Our suite of Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) Reliability Standards provide a foundation for sound security practices for addressing both key cyber and physical security challenges, including those identified in DHS' recent "Shields Up" guidance.

These standards, which were initially approved in January 2008, establish necessary controls and physical and electronic perimeters for cyber assets. They also mandate recovery plans, incident reporting and vulnerability assessments. Entities are audited regularly to ensure compliance with these standards, with non-compliance subject to significant financial penalties. This, in combination with the activities of NERC's E-ISAC, provides a robust cyber and physical security structure for industry in the United States and Canada.

In 2014, FERC directed NERC to develop a mandatory physical security standard that was put in place to address issues related to the 2013 Metcalf substation event in California, which although serious, did not result in any outages to consumers. FERC said at the time, "Electric systems are designed to be resilient and it would be difficult for attackers to disable many locations." The majority of physical security incidents are related to copper theft, trespassing, damage from hunters and drone surveillance.

In addition, through capabilities including the Cybersecurity Risk Information Sharing Program (CRISP) and other sensor and intelligence platforms, the E-ISAC analyzes security data for patterns of incidents and shares the result with asset owners and operators. This information sharing and industry collaboration facilitates strong, knowledge-based defense-in-depth capabilities.

NERC also coordinates closely with other critical infrastructure sectors and our government partners, both in the United States and Canada, including the U.S. Department of Energy, which serves as the risk management agency for the energy sector. This level of collaboration allows the E-ISAC to share intelligence about vulnerabilities and mitigation approaches to its membership rapidly, ensures vigilance and provides the ability to respond quickly should situations evolve, while supporting industry's efforts to maintain the reliability and security of the grid.



Security of the grid continues to be a key priority for NERC, the U.S. and Canadian governments and industry. The continued coordination across our industry helps ensure vigilance and allows us to respond quickly should the need arise — we know nearly 400 million North Americans are counting on us.

NERC Publishes 2021 Annual Report

The past year at NERC was defined by transformation as highlighted in NERC's <u>2021 Annual Report</u>. Both the ERO Enterprise and the grid are undergoing changes. In 2021, the ERO Enterprise faced an ongoing pandemic, extreme weather events and security risks against the backdrop of an evolving grid. The report uses NERC's 2021 focus areas to highlight the largest efforts undertaken over the course of the year:

- Expanding Risk-Based Focus in Standards, Compliance Monitoring, and Enforcement
- Assessing and Catalyzing Steps to Mitigate Known and Emerging Risks to Reliability and Security
- Building a Strong E-ISAC-Based Security Capability
- Strengthening Engagement across the Reliability and Security Ecosystem in North America
- Capturing Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Continuous Improvement Opportunities

"These are just a few of the highlights of many, and I encourage you to read NERC's 2021 Annual Report with pride in what we have achieved in such a short time," said Jim Robb, NERC's president and CEO, in his CEO Letter.

NERC Focuses on the Future, Enhancements to Stay Ahead of Urgent Risks

NERC's first Board of Trustees meeting of 2022 reflected the many achievements of the ERO in 2021 while stressing the importance of planning for the future. Given the complexities of the rapidly changing grid, the Board is focused on enhancing NERC's processes to ensure timely risk mitigation.

"We accomplished our 2021 objectives, including increasing our collaboration; enhancing our Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Program (CMEP) abilities with Align and the ERO Enterprise Secure Evidence Locker; and further transforming our relationships with the Regions and stakeholders," said Jim Robb, NERC president and CEO. "Looking forward, the rapidly changing ecosystem warrants renewed focus on emerging risks along a multi-year horizon. It requires a review of NERC processes to ensure that we stay ahead of risk."

Robb noted that there is a new body of work that needs to be done to address the changing ecosystem, which would be added on top of the work the ERO already does on a daily basis. It will be important to ensure NERC's core processes are more nimble, while still holding to NERC's collaborative and deliberative roots as well as ensuring that NERC's sustainability as an Enterprise — process maturation, resource capabilities and security — is able to meet the demand, he said.

Board Chair Ken DeFontes added: "The challenges before us call for a step change in how we fulfill our mission. This involves a new look at how NERC accomplishes its goals, especially remaining agile to address urgent reliability risks. It requires examination through a new lens — one focused on agility, adaptation and aggregated approaches. The Board has asked NERC's executive team to develop a three-year plan to address these challenges. And we will continue to share the progress with you."

Robb noted that NERC's 2021 Annual Report, which highlights some of the ERO Enterprise's 2021 accomplishments, was published. "It's really amazing to see what we've done over the past year. Our technical work has advanced from identifying issues to also providing solutions; we have added clarity and nuance to our reliability assessments; and the E-ISAC has enhanced collaboration with our Department of Homeland Security and Department of Energy partners and has enhanced sharing of threat information with our members. I encourage you to take a look at the report."

Opening remarks also were made by Patricia Hoffman, acting assistant secretary, Office of Electricity, Department of Energy; and David Morton, CAMPUT chair and representative to NERC.

Board Action

Earlier in the day, the Member Representatives Committee re-elected NERC Board of Trustee members Jane Allen, Bob Clarke, Colleen Sidford and Ken DeFontes



to new terms. The Board meeting began with the approval of Ken DeFontes as chair, George Hawkins as vice chair and the new Board committee appointments. In addition, the Board approved amendments to their committee mandates, the NERC governance guidelines and the vice chair stipend as well as a renewal of the capital financing program. The Board also approved the appointment of NERC officers, including new additions of Bryan Preston as vice president, People and Culture, and Kimberly Mielcarek, as vice president, Communications.

The Board approved revisions to the Standards Committee Charter, clarifying the role of the committee as a procedural oversight body and reiterating how existing tools can be applied to address urgent reliability needs. The Board also found that more work remains to ensure NERC's processes are as agile as possible to focus efforts on the most urgent reliability needs on a timely basis.

To address this concern, the Board directed NERC staff to review standards development rules and recommend any changes that would improve NERC's ability to respond to urgent reliability needs, while also maintaining the essential elements of an open and inclusive process for its stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback will be considered in developing these recommendations, which will be presented to the Board in December.

The Board also approved a modification to Reliability Standard CIP-014-3 – Physical Security. This modified version of the standard removes a unique compliance monitoring provision, which is no longer needed following the adoption of the ERO Enterprise Secure Evidence Locker and other tools for secure review of sensitive evidence. No changes were proposed to the mandatory and enforceable elements of the standard.

Also receiving approval were the 2022 work plans for the Standards Committee, the Compliance and Certification Committee and the Personnel Certification Governance Committee, which also received approval for its *System Operator Certification Manual*.

Updates

In addition, the Board received an update on activities in support of resolutions approved by the Board regarding the CIP Reliability Standards, including continued work on CIP-003-08. Howard Gugel, NERC's vice president of Engineering and Standards, shared that work is continuing on a white paper to identify risks and inform management of risks posed by low-impact bulk electric system (BES) Cyber Systems. The white paper is expected to be posted for comment in the second quarter of the year.

"Cyber security continues to remain a high priority for the ERO and our industry," Gugel said. "We continue to examine our cyber standards to ensure that necessary controls are applied to critical systems to maintain the reliability of the bulk power system."

Gugel also provided an update on the development of Reliability Standards to address the recommendations in the <u>FERC, NERC, Regional Entity Staff Report</u> on the February 2021 cold weather outages in Texas and the South-Central United States.

A <u>Standard Authorization Request</u> was posted on November 17, 2021, to initiate the standards recommendations in the report. Gugel said comments are now being reviewed. The first phase of standards development will be completed by September 30, 2022, submitted to NERC's Board in October 2022 and submitted to FERC before the 2022–2023 winter season, as directed in the November 2021 Board resolution. The second phase will be completed by September 30, 2023, submitted to NERC's Board in October 2023 and filed with FERC by the 2023–2024 winter season, also in accordance with the Board resolution.

The North American Transmission Forum (NATF) updated the Board on supply chain activities, pursuant to the Board's 2017 request that NATF develop and share best practices in supply chain management. This work has complemented the efforts of the ERO Enterprise and allowed NERC and industry to work more effectively and efficiently to address supply chain risk, Gugel said.



A year-end summary of the ERO's <u>2021 Work Plan</u> <u>Priorities</u> that focused on three key areas — winterization, energy assurance and cyber security — was shared with the Board. NERC reported that it delivered on 53 of the 57 set, tactical priorities under significant unforeseen challenges including the ongoing pandemic, Winter Storm Uri, unprecedented security threats and the changing reliability ecosystem. The Board approved the ERO's <u>2022</u> Work Plan Priorities in November 2021.

An update on NERC's <u>Risk Registry</u> highlighted the most critical high-priority challenges currently facing industry: extreme natural events, including cold weather; security risks — both cyber and physical; inverters; and energy adequacy, for which all critical 2021 tasks were completed. The registry was created to monitor existing risks and manage the efforts of the ERO. Future versions of the Risk Registry will be used as project/resource management tool and will eventually include a risk prioritization that is reviewed with the Reliability Issues Steering Committee.

Board presentations are located on <u>NERC's website</u>. The next Board of Trustees meeting is May 12 in Washington, D.C.

Long-Time NERC Leader Michehl R. Gent Passes Away

It is with great sadness that NERC notes the passing of Michehl R. Gent on February 1, 2022. Gent had a long career of contributions during his tenure at NERC. He joined the organization, then called the National Electric Reliability Council, in 1980 as executive vice president and was elected president and CEO in 1982, a role that he held until his retirement in 2005.

Under his leadership, NERC staff grew from an organization of five people to more than 50 employees. He was at the forefront of the industry's efforts to improve the protection of critical and cyber assets, both before and after September 11, 2001. He also led the technical investigations into the August 14, 2003, Northeast blackout and implementation of recommendations resulting from the investigation.

"Mike was totally dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the reliability and resilience of the North American electric grid during his almost 25 years of leadership at NERC," said Roy Thilly, NERC Board of Trustees member and former Board chair. "He led the effort to transition the organization from a voluntary body to an entity with a fully independent Board charged by federal law with adopting and enforcing mandatory reliability standards in the public interest."

In 1999, Gent launched the Electricity Sector Information Sharing and Analysis Center under a request from the Department of Energy and agreed to serve as industry's primary point of contact for the U.S. government on national security and critical infrastructure protection issues.

After his retirement, Gent served on the Board of Directors for the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) for many years.

"From day one, Mike was an amazing boss and mentor to me and the rest of the staff. His motto was 'having fun being the best,' and we lived that motto every day in everything we did,"said Dave Nevius, retired senior vice president of NERC, who worked with Gent for 25 years. "But more than that, Mike was my very best friend, golf partner and caddie, travel buddy, confidant, and best man at my wedding. Even after his retirement and return to San Diego, I stayed in close touch with Mike, speaking with him nearly every day. Just like his Texas Aggies, Mike will always be the '12th Man' watching over NERC as it continues to keep the lights on throughout North America."

Compliance

ERO Enterprise Posts Revised CIP Evidence Request Tool

NERC posted a <u>revised ERO Enterprise CIP Evidence</u> <u>Request Tool (ERT)</u>, 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. For more information or assistance, please contact <u>Daniel</u> <u>Bogle</u>.

Compliance Guidance Update

Implementation Guidance is developed by industry and vetted through pre-qualified organizations. In order for an organization to become pre-qualified, a member of that organization must submit an application to the and Certification Committee. Vetted Compliance examples can then be submitted to the ERO Enterprise for endorsement, and, if endorsed, the ERO Enterprise would give the example deference during CMEP activities with consideration of facts and circumstances. Implementation Guidance would not prescribe the only approach to implementing a standard and entities may choose alternative approaches that better fit their situation. Draft Implementation Guidance is posted while it is being considered for ERO Enterprise endorsement. Once the Implementation Guidance is endorsed, it will be moved to the ERO Enterprise-Endorsed Implementation Guidance section. Draft Implementation Guidance that does not receive ERO Enterprise endorsement will be removed.

In February, NERC posted two new proposed Implementation Guidance documents to the Proposed Implementation Guidance section of the NERC Compliance Guidance web page:

- <u>CIP-013</u> Using Independent Assessments of Vendors (NATF)
- <u>CIP-013 Supply Chain Risk Management Plans</u> (NATF)

NERC Adds New Self-Identified Alignment Issue

CMEP Practice Guides address how ERO Enterprise CMEP staff execute compliance monitoring and enforcement activities. They are developed exclusively by the ERO Enterprise under its obligations for independence and objectivity. In some cases, Practice Guides may be developed following policy discussions with industry stakeholders. CMEP Practice Guides are posted on the NERC website for transparency.

NERC added a self-identified alignment issue pertaining to CMEP Practice Guide on considerations for ERO

Enterprise CMEP staff on Modeling and Studies Involving Distributed Energy Resources. 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 <u>centralized repository</u>. The Consistency Reporting Tool uses a third-party application, EthicsPoint, which allows stakeholders to submit consistency issues—anonymously, if desired.

NERC Publishes CMEP Annual Report

NERC published the <u>2021 CMEP Annual Report</u>, highlighting key ERO Enterprise Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Program (CMEP) and Organization Registration and Certification Program (ORCP) activities that occurred in 2021 and providing information and statistics regarding those activities.

Standards

Nomination Period for Project 2022-01 – Reporting ACE Definition and Associated Terms

NERC is seeking nominations for Project 2022-01 – Reporting ACE Definition and Associated Terms drafting team members through 8 p.m. Eastern, Thursday, **March 10, 2022**. Drafting team activities include participation in technical conferences, stakeholder communications and outreach events, periodic drafting team meetings and conference calls. Approximately one face-to-face meeting per quarter can be expected (on average three full working days each meeting) with conference calls scheduled as needed to meet the agreed-upon timeline the drafting team sets forth. NERC is seeking individuals who perform responsibilities under the BAL standards:

- Real-time monitoring
- Balancing Authority
- Operational Planning Analysis
- Real-time Assessments

By submitting a nomination form, you are indicating your willingness and agreement to participate actively in faceto-face meetings and conference calls. Previous drafting or review team experience is beneficial, but not required. Use the <u>electronic form</u> to submit a nomination



and contact <u>Wendy Muller</u> regarding issues with the system. An unofficial Word version of the nomination form is posted on the <u>Standard Drafting Team Vacancies</u> page and the <u>project page</u>. The Standards Committee is expected to appoint members to the drafting team in April 2022. Nominees will be notified shortly after they have been appointed.

System Operator Certification & Credential Maintenance Program

NERC Seeks Participants for New Credential Maintenance Research Project

NERC's Personnel Certification Governance Committee (PCGC), Credential Maintenance Working Group (CMWG), and the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) are seeking participants for a research project related to the NERC Certified System Operator (NCSO) program.

The project team is seeking information and feedback on credential maintenance practices from:

- Credential holders
- Employers of credential holders
- Training content providers

Your participation will allow the project team to prioritize the needs of credential holders and employers in any proposed program changes. Information will be collected using surveys, which will take 10–15 minutes to complete. Volunteers may be selected for follow-up interviews or focus groups. Data collection will begin in mid-March with the NCSO surveys.

If you are willing to participate in the Credential Maintenance Research Project as a NERC Certified System Operator or an employer, please <u>click here</u>.

NERC, the PCGC, and the CMWG thank you for your participation.

Project Background

In May 2021, the PCGC invited organizations to submit bid proposals for the Credential Maintenance Research Project. After review of the vendor submittals, the contract was awarded to EPRI, and the project kicked off in September 2021. The primary purpose of this project is to examine credential maintenance practices against literature and other credentialing bodies/institutions to determine what evidence-based changes and/or enhancements should be made to the NCSO program. This includes the existing NCSO credential maintenance continuing education hours (CEH) requirements that fully meet the requirements of <u>PER-003-2 – Operating Personnel Credentials</u>.

The secondary purpose of this project is to determine if there is sufficient evidence to warrant consolidating the existing four NCSO credentials into one credential and, if so, recommend the appropriate maintenance requirements for the one credential based on evidence. The project is intended to promote efficiency while ensuring that NCSOs are obtaining the appropriate amount and type of CEHs to perform under normal and emergency circumstances. The project is scheduled to be completed in August 2022.

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 <u>NERC calendar</u>.

- FERC–NERC Joint Review of Commissioning <u>Programs</u> Webinar – 2:00–3:30 p.m. Eastern, March 2, 2022 | <u>Register</u>
- Reliability and Security Technical Committee Informational Session – 1:00–2:00 p.m. Eastern, March 3, 2022 | <u>Register</u>
- CIP-012 Small Group General Advisory Session 11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Eastern, March 8, 2022 | <u>Register</u>
- Reliability and Security Technical Committee Meeting – 11:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Eastern, each day, March 8–9, 2022 | March 8 Registration | March 8 Agenda Package | March 9 Registration | March 9 Agenda Package
- Utilizing Excess Capability of BPS-Connected Inverter-Based Resources for Frequency Support Webinar – 1:00–3:00 p.m. Eastern, April 19, 2022
 Register

Regional Entity Events

Midwest Reliability Organization (MRO)

• MRO RAM/CIP Virtual Conference, March 23

ReliabilityFirst (RF)

• <u>Technical Talk with RF</u>, March 21

SERC Reliability Corporation

- <u>2022 O&P Spring Reliability and Security</u> <u>Webinar</u>, March 8
- <u>2022 CIP Spring Reliability and Security Webinar</u>, March 9

Texas RE

• Talk with Texas RE – <u>Odessa Disturbance Lessons</u> <u>Learned and Best Practices</u>, March 3

WECC

 Talk with Texas RE – <u>Odessa Disturbance Lessons</u> <u>Learned and Best Practices</u>, March 3

Filings

NERC Filings to FERC in February

February 14

Compliance Filing in Response to January 2013 Order | NERC submits an unaudited report of NERC's budget-to-actual variance information for the fourth quarter 2021. This compliance filing is in accordance with FERC's January 16, 2013 Order, which approved a Settlement Agreement between the FERC Office of Enforcement and NERC, related to findings and recommendations arising out of its 2012 performance audit

February 16

Petition for Modification to Compliance Section of CIP-014 NERC submits a petition for approval, to the extent necessary, of modifications to the Compliance section of Reliability Standard CIP-014 and request for expedited action.

February 18

Joint Petition of NERC and ReliabilityFirst for Approval of Amendments to ReliabilityFirst Bylaws | NERC and ReliabilityFirst submit a petition for approval of amendments to ReliabilityFirst Bylaws.

There were no NERC Canadian filings in February.

Careers at NERC

Associate Counsel/Counsel (Standards) Location: Washington, D.C. or Atlanta Details

CIP Assurance Advisor Location: Atlanta Details

Electricity Sector OT Cyber Security Specialist Location: Atlanta Details

Engineer – BPS Security and Grid Transformation Location: Atlanta Details

Standards Developer

Location: Atlanta Details

Standard Development Administrator Location: Atlanta

Details