NERC
NORTH AMERICAN ELECTRIC RELIABILITY CORPORATION

Provider Reference Guide

March 2022

RELIABILITY | RESILIENCE | SECURITY

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Preface

Electricity is a key component of the fabric of modern society and the Electric Reliability Organization (ERO) Enterprise serves to strengthen that fabric. The vision for the ERO Enterprise, which is comprised of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) and the six Regional Entities, is a highly reliable and secure North American bulk power system (BPS). Our mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid.

Reliability | Resilience | Security
Because nearly 400 million citizens in North America are counting on us

The North American BPS is made up of six Regional Entity boundaries as shown in the map and corresponding table below. The multicolored area denotes overlap as some load-serving entities participate in one Regional Entity while associated Transmission Owners/Operators participate in another.
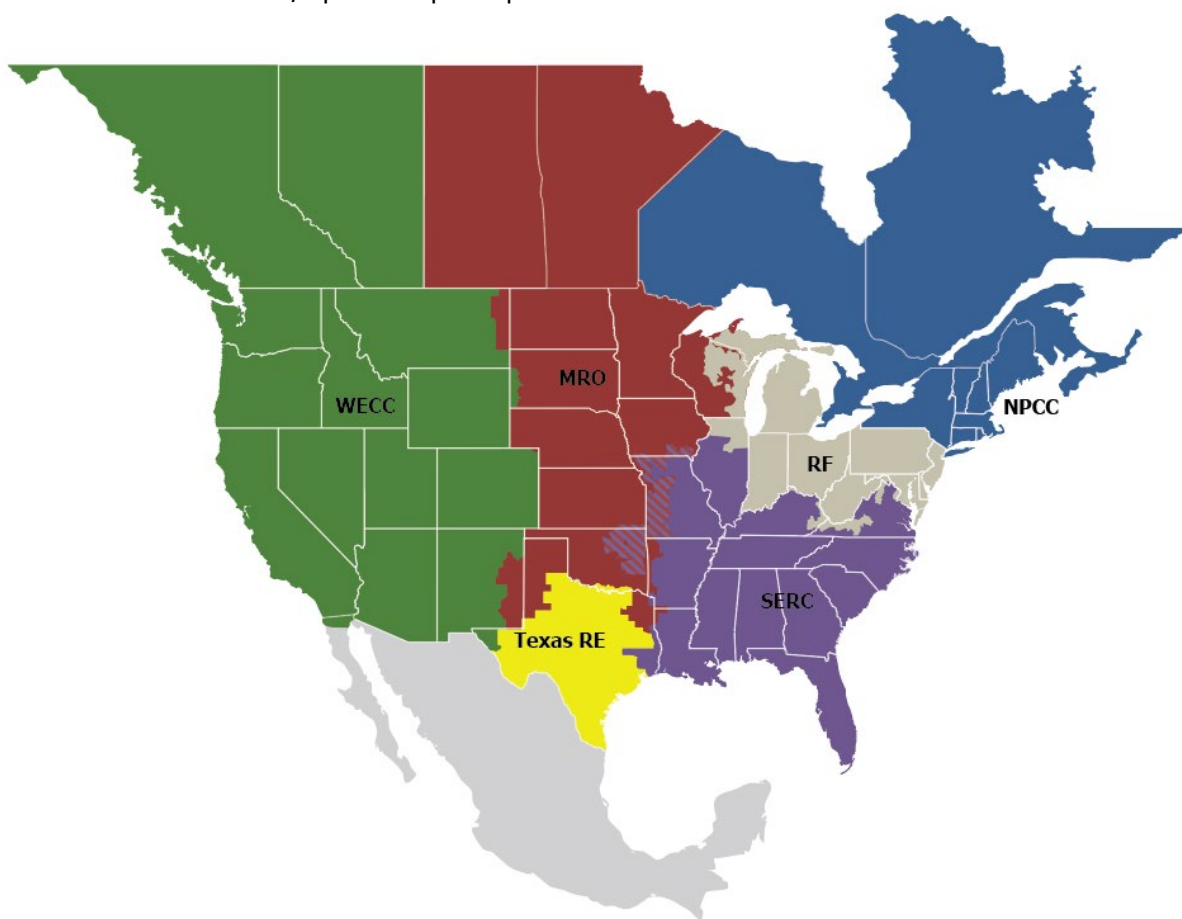
MRO	Midwest Reliability Organization
NPCC	Northeast Power Coordinating Council
RF	ReliabilityFirst
SERC	SERC Reliability Corporation
Texas RE	Texas Reliability Entity
WECC	WECC

Summary

The Credential Maintenance Program Administrative Manual[1] (CM Manual) provides the framework for the Credential Maintenance program. It is the Provider's responsibility to read and understand the CM Manual.

The CM Manual is located on the System Operator Certification & Credential Maintenance Program[2] on NERC.com[3] under One-Stop Shop[4].

The Provider Reference Guide (PRG) provides System Operator Certification and Continuing Education Database (SOCCED) information and 'how to' for providers. The PRG references the CM Manual numerous times. NERC staff recommends providers refer to the manual when noted in the guide.

Please submit additional topic suggestions or feedback via a SOCCED Help Desk[5] ticket.

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[1] https://www.nerc.com/pa/Train/SysOpCert/System%20Operator%20Certification%20DL/CE_Manual_v4.6_July_2020.pdf
[2] https://www.nerc.com/pa/Train/SysOpCert/Pages/default.aspx
[3] https://www.nerc.com/Pages/default.aspx
[4] https://www.nerc.com/pa/Train/SysOpCert/Pages/SOOneStopShop.aspx
[5] https://soccedsupport.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new

Introduction

System Operator Certification and Credential Maintenance Program

In support of NERC's mission, the SOC Program promotes the reliability of the North American bulk power system (BPS) by ensuring that employers have a workforce of SOs that meet minimum qualifications. NERC monitors SOs to ensure they maintain the required credentials to work in system control centers across North America. NERC's SOC exam tests specific knowledge of job skills and reliability standards. It also prepares operators to handle the BPS during normal and emergency operations. Maintain certification by completing NERC-approved Credential Maintenance Program courses and activities. These industry-accepted qualifications are set through internationally recognized processes and procedures for agencies that certify persons.

Governance

The Personnel Certification Governance Committee (PCGC)[6] is a NERC standing committee that provides oversight to the policies and processes used to implement and maintain the integrity and independence of the NERC SOC program. The PCGC provides reports to the NERC Board of Trustees and NERC President regarding the governance and administration of the SOC program.

The Credential Maintenance Working Group (CMWG)[7] reports to the PCGC and is responsible for developing and maintaining the Credential Maintenance Program under the general guidelines set by the PCGC, including:

1. Development and implementation of NERC Credential Maintenance Program requirements to ensure quality-learning activities for use in NERC Certified System Operator credential maintenance.

2. Development and maintenance of a process to approve credential maintenance providers and learning activities that meet the PCGC credential maintenance requirements.

3. Periodic audits of credential maintenance providers and training activities to ensure the approved providers and training activities satisfy the PCGC credential maintenance requirements.

4. Development and maintenance of a multi-level review process for disputed application reviews, probation, or suspension of NERC-approved provider status, and Credential Maintenance Hour disputes.

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[6] https://www.nerc.com/comm/PCGC/Pages/default.aspx
[7] https://www.nerc.com/comm/PCGC/Pages/CMWG.aspx

Credential Maintenance Program

NERC's Credential Maintenance Program acknowledges high-quality learning activities within the electric utility industry by approving continuing education providers that meet NERC guidelines and standards. Information on becoming a NERC-recognized continuing education provider can be found in the Credential Maintenance Program Administrative Manual[8].

Provider Functions in SOCCED:

Continuing Education providers can access SOCCED[9] to do the following:

Level 1 Providers

1. Create a new provider account

2. Access an existing provider user account

3. Update provider user profile

4. Update organization profile

5. Manage provider users

6. Apply and/or renew provider account (Level 1 or Level 2)

7. View system operator transcripts and certificate renewal progress

8. View order history

Level 2 and Level 3 Providers

1. Create a new provider account

2. Access an existing provider user account

3. Update provider user profile

4. Update organization profile

5. Manage provider users

6. Apply/renew provider account (Level 1, 2, or 3)

7. Upgrade/renew provider application

8. Submit supplemental documentation for Individual Learning Activities (ILAs)/audits

9. Submit individual learning activity (ILA) applications

10. Renew ILAs

11. Review the status of existing courses

12. Award, edit or delete Continuing Education Hours (CEHs) for delivered courses

13. View system operator transcripts and certificate renewal progress

14. View order history

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8 https://www.nerc.com/pa/Train/SysOpCert/System%20Operator%20Certification%20DL/CE_Manual_v4.6_July_2020.pdf
9 https://nerc-socced.useclarus.com

Chapter 1: Creating and Updating Provider User Accounts

Creating an Account in SOCCED

> **TIP –** If the organization has an existing account in SOCCED and a user should have access, *skip* to **Inviting a Provider User**. For the system to associate a new provider user account with the existing organization's account, the primary user of the account must invite the user via SOCCED to have access. If the primary user is no longer with the organization, submit a ticket via the SOCCED Help Desk,[10] a NERC SOCCED Administrator will assist.
>
> If the organization does not have an existing account with SOCCED and the person creating the account will be the primary user, please follow the steps below.

To *create* a provider account in SOCCED, go to the SOCCED database and *click* on **Create Provider Account**.
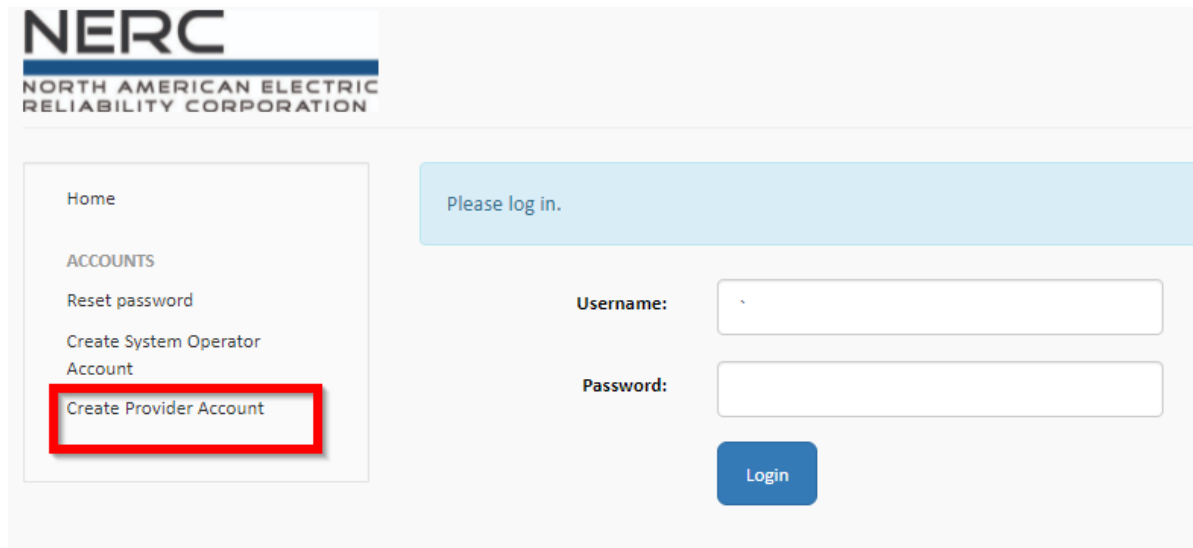
During the process, the provider user will be prompted to create a username and password and provide other pertinent information.

Username: Determine by provider user
First Name: First name on driver's license or other form of legal ID
Middle Name: Optional or first letter of middle name (common first and last names should use a middle initial, at a minimum.)
Last Name: Last name on driver's license or other form of legal ID

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[10]

Home

ACCOUNTS

Reset password

Create System Operator
Account

Create Provider Account

You have to fill out the user profile first in order to apply for provider.

(*) denotes a required field

Account Information

User Name *

Email Address *

Password

Confirm Password

Primary Provider User Profile

First name *

Middle Name

Last name *

Job title

Company Address

Address *

Address (cont.)
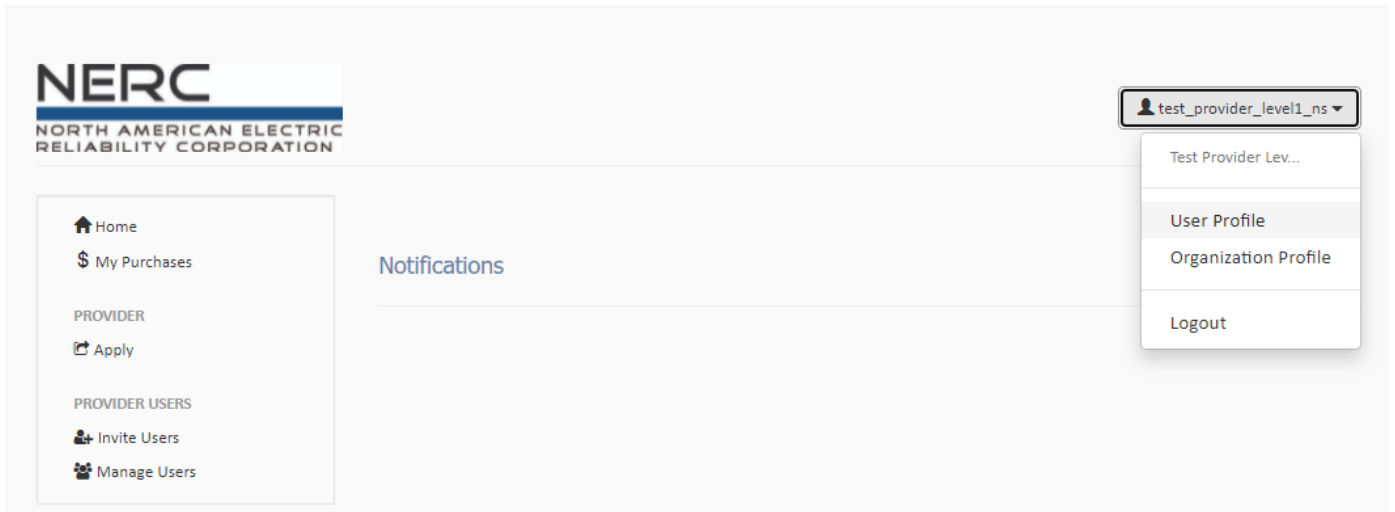
City *

Country *   Select an Option

State *   Select an Option

Postal Code *

Phone Number *

Alternate Phone

Submit

Updating User Profile

The provider user has the ability to make changes to contact information by updating the user profile in SOCCED.

1. *Login* in to **SOCCED**

2. *Select* **Dropdown arrow** and *select* **User Profile**
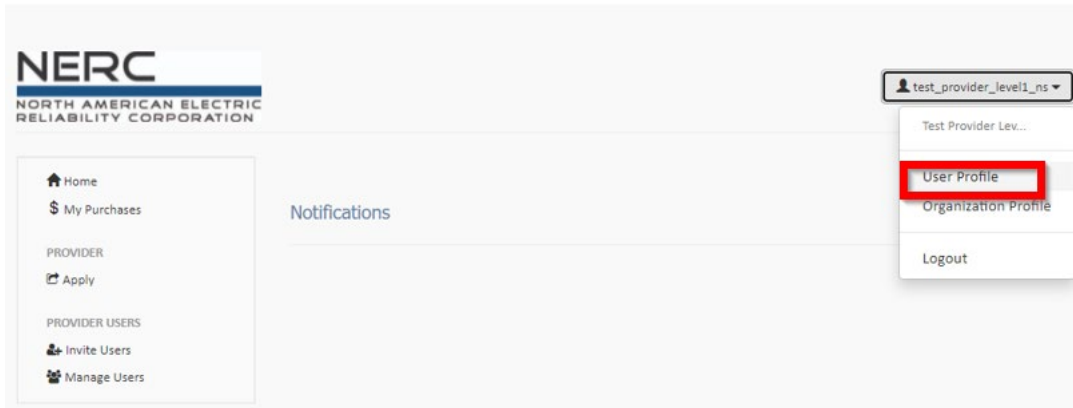

3. *Select* **Update Profile**
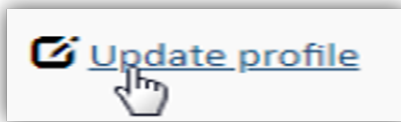
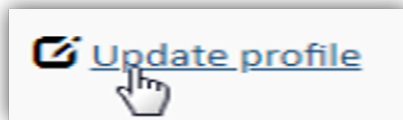   a.   Make necessary changes

    b.   *Select* **Save Changes**

Updating Organization Profile

The primary provider user can update the organization's contact information by updating the organization profile in SOCCED.

1. *Login* in to **SOCCED**

2. *Select* **Dropdown arrow** and *select* **User Profile**

3. *Select* **Update Profile**

    a. Make necessary changes

    b. *Select* **Save Changes**

Logging into a Provider User Account

Go to the SOCCED database and use the credentials used when the provider user account was created.

Duplicate SOCCED Accounts

Provider users should not create duplicate accounts. Duplicate SOCCED accounts are prohibited. NERC completes routine audits on duplicate accounts. If found, NERC will move forward in closing the duplicate account(s), and the provider user will potentially lose information.

If the provider user cannot recall the username/password, submit a ticket to the SOCCED Help Desk, a NERC SOCCED administrator will assist.

Forgot Username / Password

- Submit a ticket via the SOCCED Help Center[11].

Include full name, email address, and phone number

Help Desk

NERC Staff manages and responds to SOCCED System Operator and Credential Maintenance Program questions typically within 48 business hours (excluding holidays and weekends).

- Help Desk: (404) 446-9759 (General Questions; M-F 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Eastern)

- Submit a Request[12] to the SOCCED helpdesk.

Include full name, email address, and phone number.

Table 1.1: Help Desk Initial Contact	
Day Ticket Received	**Initial Response by NERC Administrator No Later Than**
Sunday	Tuesday
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday
Thursday	Monday
Friday	Monday
Saturday	Tuesday

Note: Do not send messages via the SOCCED database. Messages submitted via the SOCCED database will not receive a response. They do not reach the SOCCED Help Desk.

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[11] https://soccedsupport.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new
[12] https://soccedsupport.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new

Chapter 2: Provider Applications

There are three types of provider applications[13]:

1. Initial Application as a Level 1 or Level 2
2. Initial Application as a Level 3
3. Renewal application (all levels)

At the time of submitting an initial application for an organization that does not have an account in SOCCED, the provider user must follow the steps below:
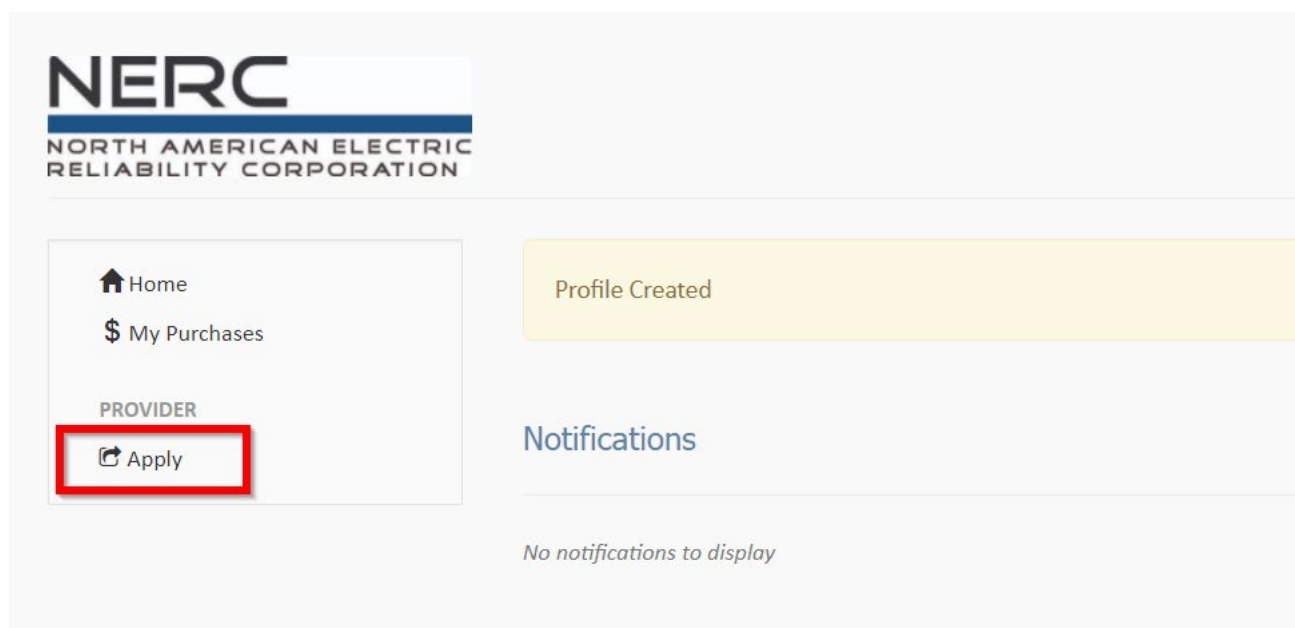
The provider user must first create a profile. See **Chapter 1: Creating and Updating Provider User Accounts**.

Initial Application for Level 1 and Level 2 Providers

Provider users with an account in SOCCED that has not been associated to an existing organization can create a Provider Organization account at the time they create a provider user account. See **Chapter 1: Creating and Updating Provider User Accounts** .

After creating the provider user account, users must:

1. *Go to* **Apply** menu in the provider user account
2. *Select* **Level 1** or **Level 2** provider (make sure the correct one is selected)
3. *Complete* all of the required fields in the **Provider Profile** section
   a. Level 2 Providers will also have to *complete* a **Provider Application** section
4. *Submit* application fee

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[13] Criteria can be found in the Credential Maintenance Program Administrative Manual -
https://www.nerc.com/pa/Train/SysOpCert/System%20Operator%20Certification%20DL/CE_Manual_v4.6_July_2020.pdf

Level 1 Providers

If the organization applied to become a Level 1 provider, the application will be automatically approved once the fee is paid. The account will be active effective immediately.

Level 2 Providers

If the organization applied to become a Level 2 provider, the provider user will also have to complete a **Provider Application** section and will have to submit supporting documentation per Chapter 3 of the CM Manual[14]. The application will be reviewed by the CMWG to determine if the organization's application will be approved.

Application to become a Level 3 Provider

In order to apply for a Level 3 provider status, the organization must have been operating successfully as a Level 2 provider for a minimum of one year. Once approved to become a Level 3 provider, the organization renews every three years.

Providers looking to apply to become a Level 3 provider at the time of renewal must go to the Upgrade/Renew button on the dashboard.
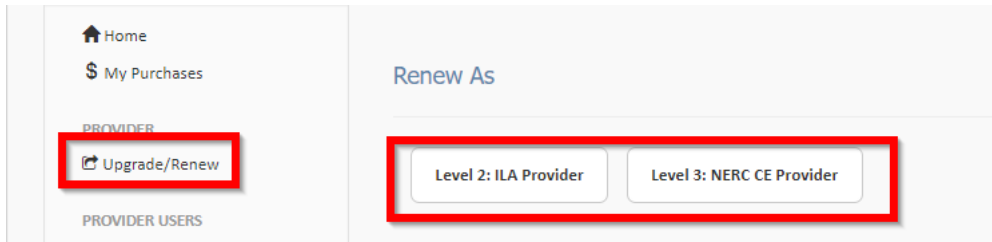
Once an application has been submitted to become a Level 3 provider, the NERC Program Coordinator will select one of the provider's active courses for a Level 2 course audit. The course will be assigned to the CMWG and a reviewer will work with the provider to complete the process.

Renewal (all Provider Levels)

Provider users will have the ability to renew the organization's provider status within 90 days of the organization's expiration date. All providers must meet minimum requirements to renew according to the terms of the provider status level (refer to the Credential Maintenance Program Administrative Manual[15]). Primary users of all organizations have to log into the provider user account and select the Upgrade/Renew option.

Level 1 and Level 2 providers must submit a renewal application annually via SOCCED. The provider's primary user should select the type of account the organization wishes to renew as.

Level 1 providers have the option to renew as a Level 1 or a Level 2.

Level 2 providers have the option to renew as a Level 2 or to upgrade to a Level 3 if the organization's account has been active for at least a year. They may also downgrade to a Level 1 if they wish. Level 2 providers will have to go a provider and course audit at least six months prior to the organization's expiration date.

Level 3 providers have the option to renew as a Level 3 or to downgrade to a Level 2 if they wish. All Level 3 providers will have to undergo a Provider and Level 2 course audit at the time of renewal prior. Approval of the application is contingent on successfully completing an audit.

Timing of Renewals

Once providers have met the requirements to renew the organization's provider status and paid the renewal fee, the system will update and reflect the new expiration date. Requirements must be met (including the application renewal fee) by 11:59 p.m., Eastern the evening prior to the expiration date. See the Example below.

Example

An organization with an active provider status from August 2, 2017, to August 2, 2020, will have to meet the renewal requirements prior to the organization's expiration date of August 2, 2020. If requirements are not met by 11:59

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p.m., Eastern on August 1, 2020, the provider status will change to suspended by 12:00 a.m. August 2, 2020. If the organization goes into suspension, it will not be able to carry out any of the functions allowed in the SOCCED account.

If renewal requirements are not met within 90 days after the organization's expiration date, the organization's provider status will expire. If the organization has expired, but the organization wishes to reinstate the organization's account, submit a ticket via the SOCCED Help Desk and a NERC SOCCED Administrator will advise on the next steps to take.

Time Zone

SOCCED operates in the Eastern Prevailing Time Zone. Providers should note the time zone to prevent a timing issue when completing the provider renewal. As shown in **Table 2.2** below, if the provider user/organization is located in the Pacific time zone, the organization's renewal will have to be completed by 9:00 p.m. Pacific the evening prior to the expiration date.

Table 2.1: Renewals Cutoff Time by Time Zone	
Time Zone	**Time**
Eastern	12:00 a.m.
Central	11: 00 p.m.
Mountain	10: 00 p.m.
Pacific	9: 00 p.m.

Provider Renewal Payment Timing

When renewing the organization's provider status, the provider user must take into account the payment processing time. SOCCED does not allow renewal until the payment has processed.

The **Table 2.1** below shows the amount of time needed for payment via credit card and check.

Table 2.2: Provider Renewal Payment Timing	
Payment Type	**Processing Time**
Credit Card	Allow 24-48 Hours
Check	Allow 7 - 10 Days

Paying by credit card

Example: If the provider's expiration date is October 13, credit card payment must be submitted before October 11 to allow sufficient time for the payment to process.

Paying by check

Example: If the provider's expiration date is October 13, the provider user must submit the check payment before October 2 so that the organization can renew its provider status prior to October 12 at 00:00.

- Provider users that select the check payment type should include name and order number on the check. Check payments are sent to the following lockbox address:

NERC
PO Box 531652
Atlanta, GA 30353-1652

Chapter 3: Managing Provider Users

Definition

The *primary user* of an organization is the main contact for the organization. The primary user will be responsible for maintaining up-to-date contact information for the organization.

NOTE: The primary user is responsible for any audit process for the organization (Level 2 or Level 3). The NERC Program Coordinator and the Continuing Education Review Panel (CERP) will contact the person listed in the database as the primary user.

A *provider user* is someone within the organization that is able to access the organization's SOCCED account. All provider users within the same organization will be able to carry out the same functions, with the exception of the audit/renewal process.

Adding Provider Users to an Existing Organization's Account

If the organization has an existing account in SOCCED, new users must be invited by the primary user via SOCCED following the steps listed below:

1. The primary user must log into the provider user account in SOCCED.

2. *Click* on **Invite Users**
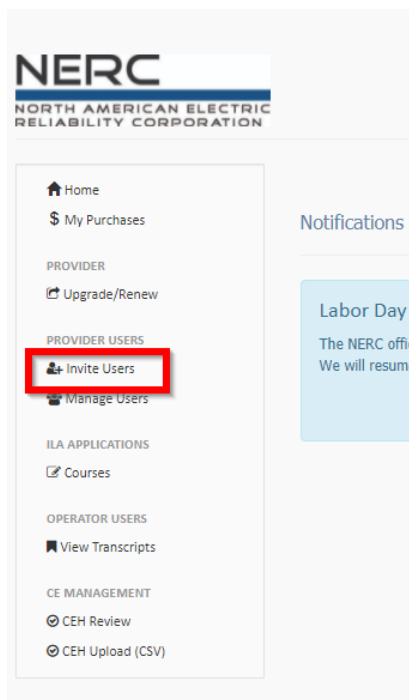
3. Enter the new user's email address and *select* **Send Invitation**

The new user will receive an email that will prompt the user to create a profile. Creating the profile via the link provided in the email, will automatically associate the new provider user account with the existing organization account.

Deactivating a Provider User's Account

The primary user of an account should deactivate users that should no longer have access to the organization's account (either due to leaving the company or a change in the role).

To deactivate a provider user, the primary user should:

4. The primary user must log in to the provider user account in SOCCED.

5. *Click* on **Manage Users**
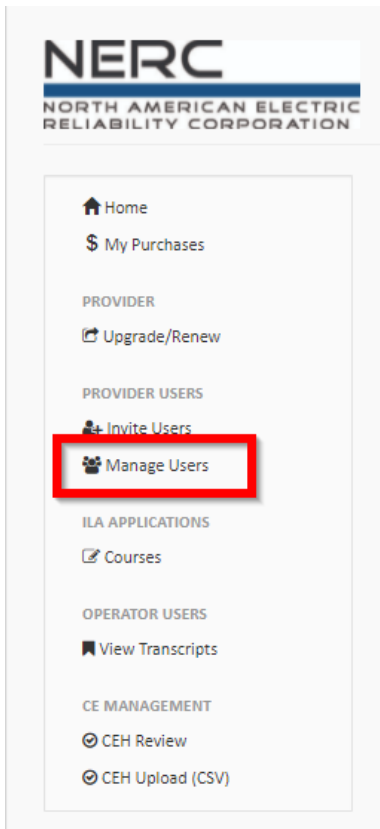
6. *Click* the **Deactivate** button next to the user's name
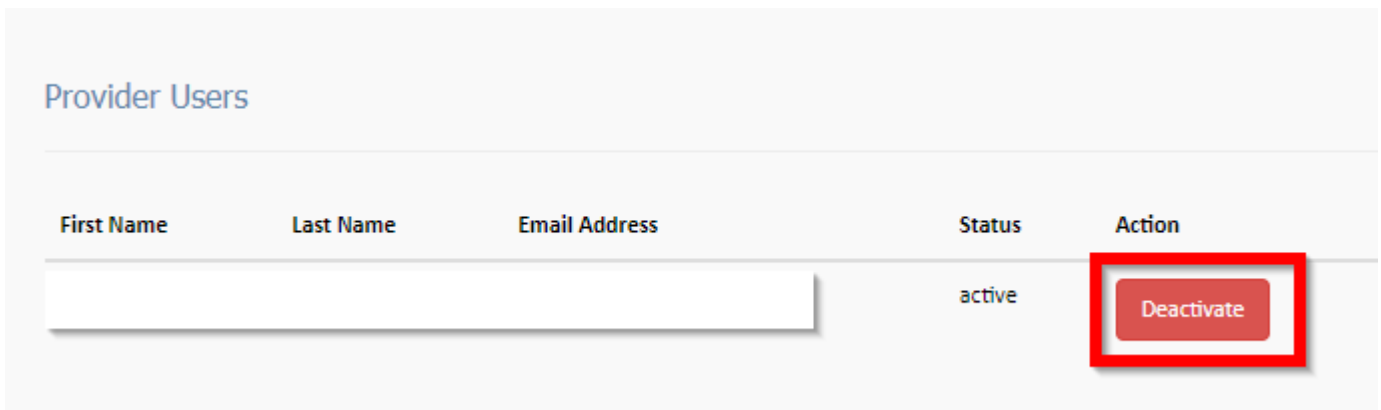
Chapter 4: Individual Learning Activities (ILAs)

Submitting an ILA
To submit an ILA in SOCCED, please refer to the *Provider User Guide: Completing an Individual Learning Activity Form*[16] created by the CMWG SOCCED Task Force.

> **Note:**
> Level 2 providers must submit ILAs 45-days *prior* to the first date of delivery.
> Level 3 providers can submit ILAs up to 30-days *after* the first date of delivery.

ILA Renewals
Providers have the ability to renew ILAs 90 days prior to the expiration date. In order to renew an existing ILA, provider users should go to the **Courses** menu. Browse through the **Action** column and determine if there are ILAs that are up for renewal. The ILA will have a blue button giving the option to **Renew Course**. *Select* the **Renew Course** button and follow the steps as directed.

Withdrawing an ILA

Providers have the option to withdraw a course any time before the ILA is approved/denied in SOCCED. To withdraw an ILA:

1. Go to the Courses menu

2. Type in the ILA's Course ID in the Search

3. Select View Details at the far right of the course

4. Select Withdraw Application

View Status of All Courses

Provider users looking for a list of all submitted courses and the current course status should go to the "Courses" menu in the provider user account. Provider users can filter by the course status (Active, Expired, Pending Assignment, Denied, Waiting for Reviewer or Withdrawn". Provider users can also sort by the Review/Application, Start Date, End Date, or the Operating topics/Standards/Simulations columns (ascending or descending).

Chapter 5: Awarding, Editing and Deleting CEHs

Level 2 and Level 3 providers have the ability to award and delete CEHs for any course they have delivered. CEHs may be awarded to operators by an employer (that is an approved provider within SOCCED) or a third-party provider.

Provider users can award CEHs manually via SOCCED or via a CSV upload.

To Award CEHs Manually (one course/one operator per entry):

1. Provider users should log into the provider user SOCCED account.

2. *Click* on **CEH Review**

3. *Scroll* to the bottom and *select* **Add New CEH**

CE MANAGEMENT	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 0 / 2.5
⊘ CEH Review	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 0 / 2.5
⊘ CEH Upload (CSV)	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 0 / 2.5
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 0 / 2.5
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 0 / 2.5
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-10		3 / 3 / 0
	☐	2020-09-14		3 / 0 / 2.5
	☐	2020-09-14		3 / 0 / 2.5
	☐	2020-09-14		3 / 0 / 2.5
	☐	2020-09-14		3 / 0 / 2.5
	☐	2020-09-14		3 / 0 / 2.5
	☐	2020-09-14		2.5 / 2.5 / 0

Showing 1 to 25 of 1,249 entries

Previous | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | ... | 50 | Next

Delete Selected | Add new CEH | Edit Selected

4. Add the information requested and *select* **Create**

Create new entry

Course ID*: [   ]

Enrollment Date*: [   ]

Certification Number*: [   ]

Operating Topics: [   ]

Standards: [   ]
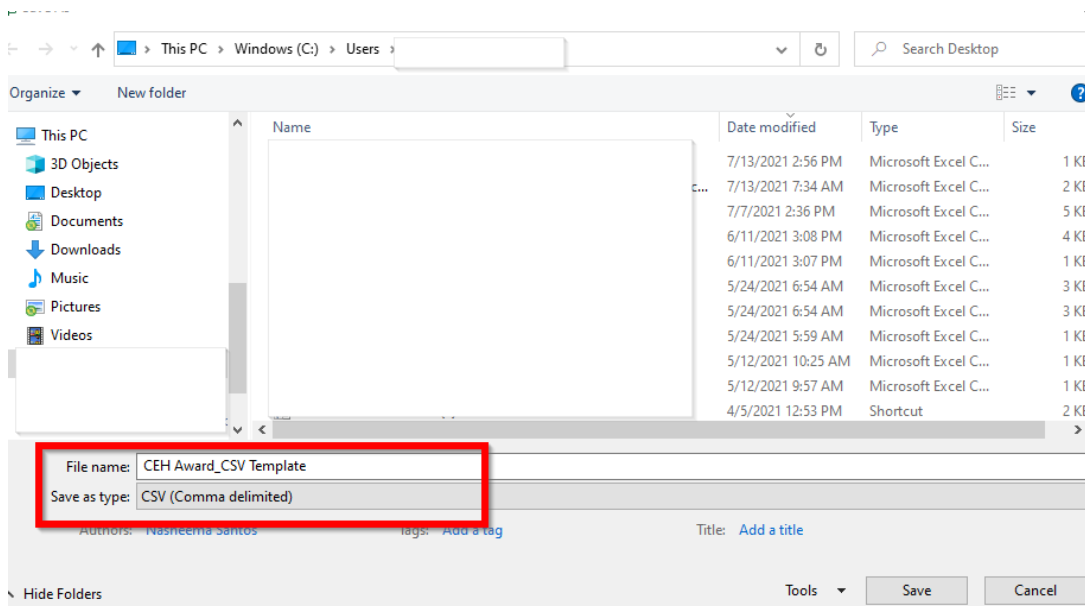
Simulations: [   ]

Cancel   Create

Awarding CEHs to Multiple Operators

To upload CEHs for multiple operators at one time, provider users should use a *CEH Upload CSV Template*[17] and save it as a **CSV** (Comma delimited) file.

Once the CSV file has been saved, add the following column headers exactly as written below (including dashes). The system is case sensitive and will not allow the upload otherwise.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	course_id	enrollment_date	certification_number	operating_topics_ceh	standards	simulations

- course_id = the course's identification ID in SOCCED

- enrollment_date = date the operator took the course

- certification_number = operator's certificate number

- operating_topics_ceh = number of operating topic hours

- standards = number of standard hours

- simulations = number of simulation hours

Add the information to the csv file per the requirements listed above. Multiple operators can be listed within the same spreadsheet (each in its own individual row).

TIP: Use one csv file per course. NERC does not recommend uploading multiple courses with multiple operators within one csv file.
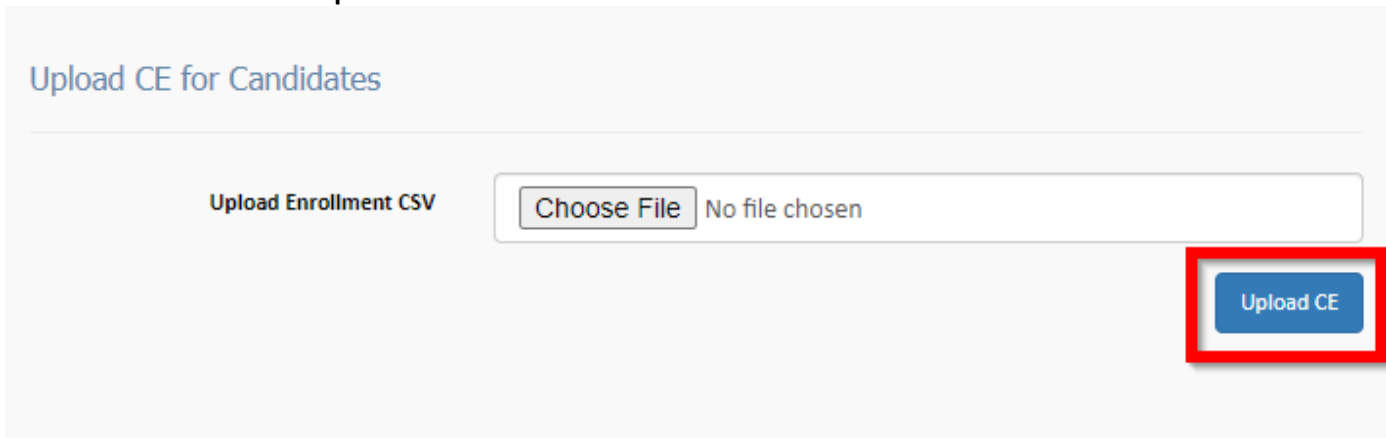

When the csv file is complete and ready for upload save it, go through the following steps to upload the csv file:

1. *Log* in to the provider user account

2. *Click* on the **CEH Upload (CSV)** option
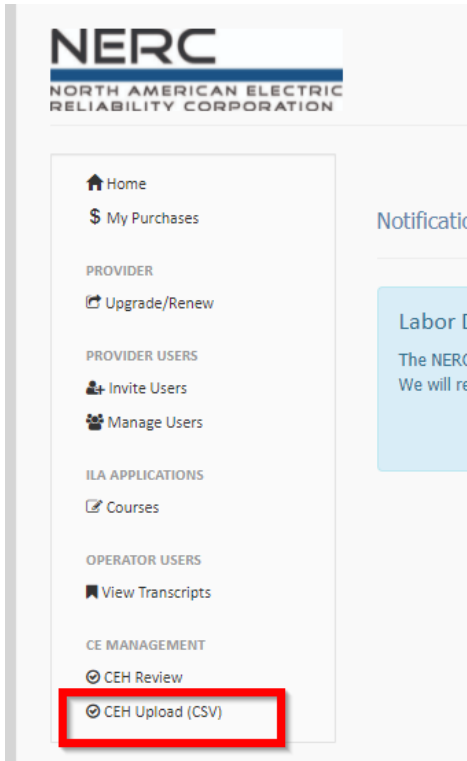
3. *Choose* the file and *select* **Upload CE**

That completes the upload of the CEHs awarded to multiple operators.

Editing CEHs

Level 2 and Level 3 providers are able to view and edit all of the CEHs they have awarded in the CEH Review screen. Providers may search by the Operator's certification number to find the entry in question or they may search by the course ID.

Enter the Certification Number into the Search box to generate a list of all of an operator's CEHs.

Entering a Course ID into the Search box will generate a list of all of the operators that have been awarded CEHs for that particular course.

To edit a line item:

- *select* the **box** to the left of the Course ID;
- *scroll* to the bottom of the screen and *select* **Edit CEHs**

Showing 1 to 25 of 2,361 entries   1 row selected

Delete Selected	Add new CEH	Edit Selected

The next screen will be an **Edit Enrollment** screen that allows the provider user to make edits to the Course ID, Enrollment Date, Certification Number, Operating Topics, Standards, and/or Simulations. Once the edit are complete, *click* the **Edit** button to save the changes.

Edit enrollment

×

|	
Course ID*:	
Enrollment Date*:	2021-11-17
Certification Number(s)*:	
Operating Topics:	12
Standards:	6
Simulations:	12

Cancel   Edit

Deleting CEHs for Single or Multiple Operators

Level 2 and Level 3 providers are able to view all of the CEHs they have been awarded in the CEH Review screen. Providers may search by the Operator's certification number (to delete CEHs for a single operator/one course) or look for the Course ID (if looking to delete CEHs for multiple operators/one course).
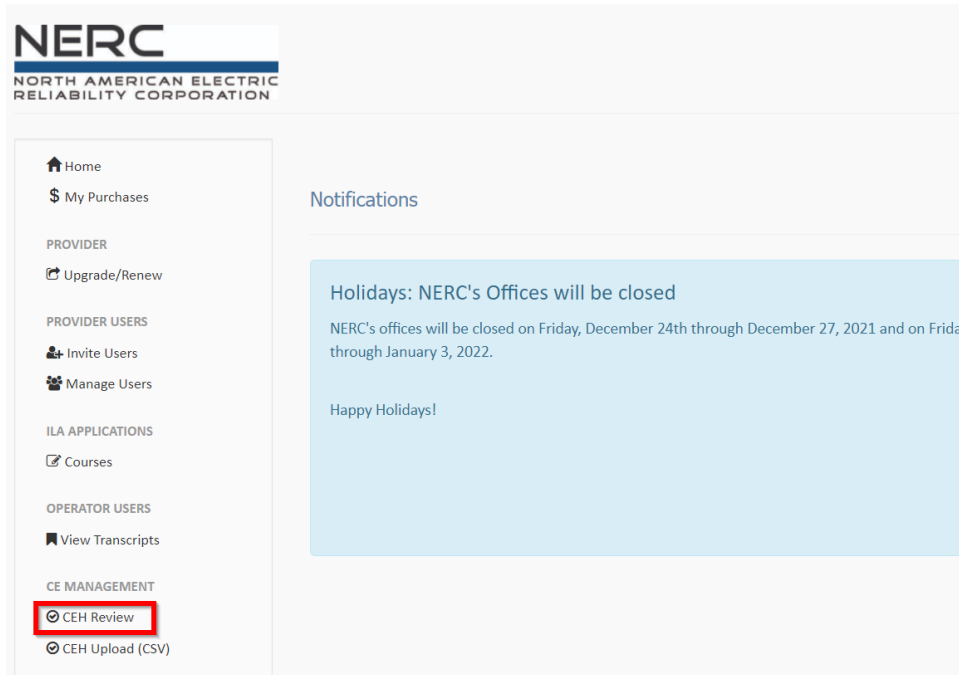

Provider users should enter the Certification Number or the Course ID into the Search box, which will generate a list of either all of a single operator's CEHs (if looking for a single entry to delete) or all of the operators that have been awarded CEHs for a particular course.

Once the line item that must be deleted is found, the provider user should:

- *select* the **box** to the left of the **Course ID**,
- *scroll* to the bottom of the screen and *click* **Delete Selected**
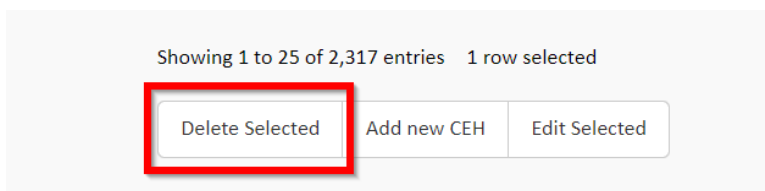
This will remove the entry from the operator(s) transcript(s).

Chapter 6: Transcript Review

Provider users can view operators' certificate renewal progress and operators' transcripts.

View Certificate Renewal Progress and Transcripts

Provider users can view an operator's certificate renewal progress. Therefore, they can see at-a-glance how many CEHs an operator has earned or is missing to meet renewal requirements.

To view the Certificate Renewal Progress, follow the steps below:

1. Log in to the provider user SOCCED account

2. *Select* **View Transcript**
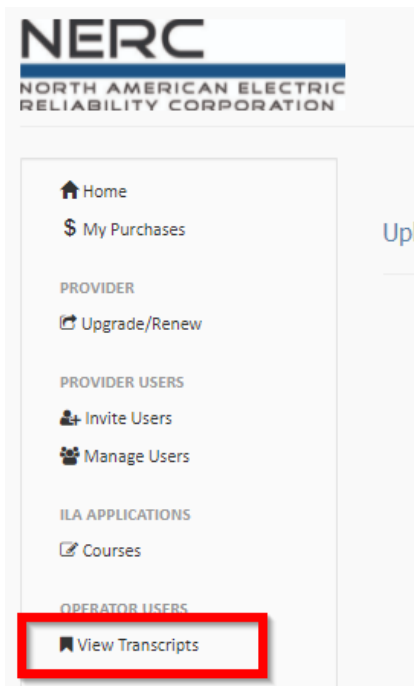
3. *Search* for the **operator** by **name**

4. *Click* on **Transcript** at the end of the **operator's name**. This will show the **Renewal Progress**

5. *Click* on **View Full Transcript**, to view the operator's complete transcript showing how many operating topics, standards, and simulation hours were earned per course and the date they were earned.

6. *Click* on **Download Transcript** to save the transcript file in an Excel format.

NOTE: Bulk download of all operators is not available at this time.

Chapter 7: Audits

Level 3 providers currently undergo an audit before renewal. To initiate the renewal application, *select* the **Upgrade/Renew** menu option in the provider user account.

Once the provider user submits the renewal application and fee, it will initiate the audit process. The NERC Program Coordinator will assign a CERP member to work with the provider to complete the audit. To submit supplementation documentation to meet audit requirements, the provider should access the ILA being audited via the **Courses** option (see **Chapter 4**) in the provider user account.

The provider user should look for the ILA that is being audited and *select* **View Details**. Viewing details of the ILA will bring up the initial ILA application. Provider users can then upload any necessary documentation directly into the "Documents" section of the ILA. All documents will populate within the ILA and the CERP member will be able to review them.

If a provider user encounters any difficulties uploading documents, submit a ticket to the SOCCED Help Desk, a NERC SOCCED Administrator will assist.

Chapter 8: View Order History

All provider users can see Order History (including applications, renewals, and ILA submittals). To view all orders, providers should:

1. Log in to the provider user SOCCED account

2. *Select* **My Purchases**
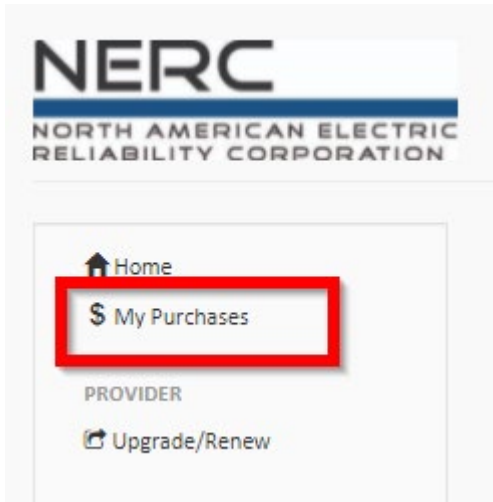
3. Provider users will be able to see all of the purchases made within the provider user's account. It will include an order number, date of purchase, item purchased, and the total.

4. *Click* on the **Order Number** to *view* the **details** of the order (i.e. ILA course ID).

Appendix A: Version History

Table A.1: Provider Reference Guide Version History				
Revision No.	**Date**	**Chapter**	**Description**	**Version**
1	3/8/2022	All	The Provider Reference Guide was approved by the Personnel Certification Program Manager	1.0