

Media Release

NERC Completes Second Grid Security Exercise

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WASHINGTON, DC – More than 200 industry and government organizations participated in the North American Electric Reliability Corporation’s two-day cyber and physical security exercise, which ended today.

NERC designed the exercise, GridEx II, to enhance and improve cyber and physical security resources and practices within the industry. The exercise gave participants the opportunity to check the readiness of their crisis action plans through a simulated security exercise to self assess response and recovery capabilities, and to adjust actions and plans as needed, while communicating with industry and government information sharing organizations.

“Protecting the bulk-power system from security threats and ensuring its resilience are vital to our national security and economic well-being,” said Gerry Cauley, president and chief executive officer at NERC. “Training on physical and cyber attacks on the grid helps industry make the system more secure.”

GridEx II, which built on lessons learned from NERC’s initial exercise in 2011, brought together more than 1,800 participants from North America, including the electricity industry, the Department of Energy, Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as Canadian and Mexican utilities and agencies.

The scenario was designed to stress the system through a series of prolonged coordinated cyber attacks against certain automated systems used by power system operators. The scenario also included coordinated physical attacks against key transmission substations and generation facilities. These attacks caused utilities to enact their crisis response plans and walk through internal security procedures.

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Participants received videos and “injects” that detailed the proposed scenario conditions. Based on this information, participants in their normal workplaces responded with both their organization’s internal response measures and external information-sharing activities across the sector.

Information sharing with industry and government stakeholders during the exercise provided the Electricity Sector-Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ES-ISAC) an opportunity to engage subject matter experts and promote problem solving. The information exchange of simulated threats allows NERC and the ES-ISAC to analyze physical and cyber threat information for trends, cross-sector dependencies and to identify specific opportunities for improvement.

“Exercises like this help strengthen relationships, improve crisis response plans and increase the flow of critical information to the electricity sector,” said Brian Harrell, associate director of Critical Infrastructure Programs at NERC. “Paired with NERC Reliability Standards and other training and education efforts, the industry continues to develop dynamic security programs to meet the ever-changing threat environment.”

Cyber and physical threats are constantly evolving and require quick action and flexibility that comes from constant vigilance and collaboration with the government and industry. NERC, the electricity industry, and the governments of North America share the mutual goal of ensuring threats to the reliability of the bulk-power system, especially security threats, are clearly understood and effectively mitigated. Reviewing the security response to the grid’s critical components during a disruptive, coordinated attack on the grid in a simulated exercise, such as GridEx II, helps the industry make the system more secure.

A report detailing findings and recommendations from GridEx II will be completed in the first quarter of 2014 and posted to NERC’s website. For more information on NERC’s cybersecurity program, click [here](#) or visit NERC’s website at www.nerc.com.

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The North American Electric Reliability Corporation’s mission is to ensure the reliability of the North American bulk-power system. NERC is the electric reliability organization (ERO), certified by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in the United States to establish and enforce reliability standards for the bulk-power system. NERC has equivalent relationships with provincial and federal authorities in Canada. NERC develops and enforces reliability standards; assesses adequacy annually via a 10-year forecast and summer and winter forecasts; monitors the bulk power system; and educates, trains and certifies industry personnel. Learn more at www.nerc.com.