

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BEFORE THE
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION**

North American Electric Reliability Corporation)	
)	Docket No. RR17-6
)	
)	

JOINT COMMENTS OF THE ALBERTA ELECTRIC SYSTEM OPERATOR, THE CALIFORNIA INDEPENDENT SYSTEM OPERATOR CORPORATION, THE INDEPENDENT ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR, ISO NEW ENGLAND, INC., AND PJM INTERCONNECTION, LLC

The Alberta Electric System Operator, The California Independent System Operator Corporation, The Independent Electricity System Operator, ISO New England, Inc., and PJM Interconnection, LLC (Joint Commenters) respectfully submits these comments in response to the Petition of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) for Approval of Proposed Revisions to the Rules of Procedure (Petition), filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) on June 26, 2017. Specifically, NERC is seeking Commission approval to make changes to Sections 600 and 900 of the Rules of Procedure (ROP) to delineate the responsibilities, governance and scope of the Personnel Certification Program, the Training and Education Program and the Continuing Education Program. Based on the rationale below, the Joint Commenters would respectfully request that the Commission reject and remand the proposed changes, directing NERC to address these comments.

I. COMMENTS

The Joint Commenters agree that changes are needed to the NERC Rules of Procedure (ROP) related to Sections 600 (Personnel Certification) and 900 (Training and Education). However, as

explained in detail below, the Joint Commenters respectfully disagree with the proposed changes as written and the rationale for making those changes in the first instance.

A. With PER-005-2 now effective, the Continuing Education Program is no longer needed and should be eliminated from the ROP.

The NERC Personnel Certification Program began in 1998 and the NERC Continuing Education Program in 2004. Both programs predate the implementation of mandatory standards in 2007. Entities have been subject to mandatory Reliability Standards that cover both certification (PER 003) and training (PER 005) for some time now. While the Joint Commenters agree that changes are needed “to clarify the scope of” these programs, the proposed changes do nothing to address the existence of these standards but seem to simply perpetuate the programs much as they have been implemented from their inception.

NERC Standard PER-005-2 goes beyond the requirements of the NERC Continuing Education program by requiring the use of a Systematic Approach to Training which requires operator training be analyzed, designed, developed and implemented in a systematic manner. It also extends these requirements to GOPs and Operations Support personnel which are not included in the Continuing Education program. With PER-005-2 now an enforceable NERC Reliability Standard, the NERC Continuing Education program has become redundant, obsolete and unnecessary. The Joint Commenters recommend the discontinuance of this program.

B. ROP requirements that relate to compliance with Reliability Standards should not be removed from the ROP so that the Standard Development Process continues to apply to them.

The Joint Commenters believe that it is inappropriate to remove “requirements in the NERC ROP” that could have any impact on an entity’s compliance with mandatory Reliability

Standards to committee charters and manuals. PER-003 requires System Operators to be NERC Certified. Currently, the only way an operator may renew their NERC Certification is through collection of Continuing Education credits. Thus, any changes to the Continuing Education program documents create “quasi-requirements” for the industry. Even though these program documents are “reviewed annually for updates and revisions are approved by the Board of Trustees,” this does not provide the industry with the same transparency and opportunity to comment on new or changed requirements that could impact compliance with PER-003.

The Joint Commenters believe that any additional requirements related to certification or training and education should be developed the same way the requirements for PER-003 and PER-005 were; that is, through the existing standard development process outlined in Section 300 of the NERC ROP. This ensures the “essential principles” of Section 304 of the ROP (*i.e.* Openness, Transparency, Consensus-building, Fair Balance of Interest, Due Process, and Timeliness) are adhered to.

To continue to develop requirements outside this process may violate the principle or spirit of Section 401.8 of the ROP where entities are not to be subject to multiple enforcement actions. By allowing NERC Continuing Education “requirements” to be changed outside of the standard development process could impact an entity’s ability to meet the certification requirements of PER-003. This especially should be considered with the NERC Continuing Education Program. Under PER-005, training providers already have requirements to implement a systematic approach to training (SAT) and have their programs regularly audited. Separate but parallel, the NERC Continuing Education program has its own requirements and audits. The Joint Commenters believe that the Continuing Education requirements and audits are inferior and may actually work against the implementation of an entity’s PER-005 SAT training program by

reviewing individual training courses in isolation instead of part of an overall training program.

C. Section 902 of the ROP should be rejected, because the provision is redundant to PER-005, Sections 300 & 400 of the ROP.

In addition to the foregoing, the Joint Commenters recommend rejection of Section 902 of the ROP. It would be inappropriate to move the existing language of Section 902 to committee charters or NERC manuals. Such language includes; “approving activities and entities”, “develop and implement ... program requirements”, “perform periodic audits”, “oversee ... Providers and activities”, “develop and maintain a process for ... interpretations of guidelines and standards, probation or suspension of NERC-approved Provider status”. With the existence of PER-005, such activities are already covered under Sections 300 and 400 of the NERC ROP.

D. References to NERC Continuing Education Program, CEHs and Re-Certification should be deleted because they are unnecessary and redundant to PER-005.

With respect to the NERC Certification Program, the Joint Commenters agree with the continuing role of the Personnel Certification and Governance Committee (PCGC) to create and administer the certification exams that entities use to be compliant with PER-003. Therefore, we agree with most of the changes made to Section 600. However, the Joint Commenters do not believe that the ROP, committee charter, or certification program manual should contain references to the NERC Continuing Education program, CEHs, and re-certification. The Joint Commenters believe it is time to re-evaluate how credential maintenance or re-certification is handled. The current tie of the Certification Program to the Continuing Education Program did not always exist, but was put in place in 2004 to encourage operator training at a time when there was no mandatory Reliability Standard for training. The Joint Commenters believe the

Continuing Education program should be discontinued as it is duplicative of PER-005. Also, the Joint Commenters recommend that NERC evaluate options for renewal of NERC Certifications absent a Continuing Education program.

II. CONCLUSION

The Joint Commenters respectfully request that the Commission accept its comments, and reject and remand NERC's Petition for further consideration of the issues raised herein.

Respectfully submitted,

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Document Content(s)

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