

Announcement

Video Highlights 20 Years of Reliability Progress following 2003 Northeast Blackout

August 1, 2023

This month marks the 20th anniversary of the 2003 Northeast blackout, which occurred on August 14, 2003, and impacted 50 million North Americans across Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Ontario. To highlight the progress the ERO Enterprise has made, NERC, NPCC and ReliabilityFirst collaborated on a video, [The Grid – 20 Years of Progress Since the 2003 Northeast Blackout](#), reflecting on the progress made since then toward a more reliable and resilient grid.

The blackout, the largest ever experienced in North America, prompted the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which created an electric reliability organization (ERO) charged with developing and enforcing mandatory Reliability Standards, assessing current and future reliability trends, analyzing system events, and recommending improved practices. NERC was certified as the ERO by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in July 2006, with the first standards going into effect on March 2007. Reflecting the interconnected nature of the grid, the National Energy Board in Canada subsequently entered into a memorandum of understanding, recognizing NERC as the international ERO in September 2006.

“Since its inception, the ERO Enterprise has adapted to the ever-evolving challenges facing the bulk power system,” said Jim Robb, NERC president and CEO. “Following the blackout, we were focused on vegetation management to ensure an event like the 2003 blackout would not occur again. As we have become more dependent on technology on the grid and in our everyday lives, the challenges our industry is facing have become even more complex. We must remain agile to be able to successfully address these changes *before* they become issues.”

As mentioned, industry is at an inflection point facing a wide variety of new challenges – resource and transmission adequacy, inverter-based resources, extreme weather and increased security threats – and the ERO Enterprise, which is NERC and the six Regional Entities, is uniquely positioned to work with industry, stakeholders, government partners and policymakers to identify and mitigate any potential impacts. While NERC and the Regional Entities play different roles in assuring the reliability and security of the grid, each role is equally important and complementary, allowing the ERO Enterprise to work effectively, efficiently, and collaboratively.

“While NERC standards have served and continue to serve us well, neither NERC nor the Regional Entities are resting on their laurels,” said Charles Dickerson, NPCC president and CEO. “We continue to collaborate, identify and address risks to reliability associated with the changing resource mix, increased cyber and physical security threats, and the attraction and retention of talent.”

The ERO Enterprise's independent voice and its collaborative relationships with industry, academic and federal, state and provincial government partners position us to address the current and evolving landscape, with both reliability and security, now and into the future.

"I am very proud of the progress the electricity industry has made since August 2003," said Tim Gallagher, RF president and CEO. "Each day, we work to reduce the likelihood of another blackout occurring by identifying and reducing risk. This work is more important than ever amid the North American bulk power system's transformation to a greener grid, all while the demands and expectations on this system are exponentially increasing. We relish this challenge, but it's something that must be given the proper amount of time to be completed. Electricity is vital to the welfare and safety of the public, to our economy, and to our way of life. Getting this wrong is not an option."

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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.

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