



Electricity Subsector
Coordinating Council

Assessing and Mitigating the Novel Coronavirus [COVID-19]

A RESOURCE GUIDE

Planning for a health emergency, such as the novel coronavirus (or COVID-19), is unique from other business continuity planning because it requires businesses to prepare to operate with a significantly smaller workforce, a threatened supply chain, and limited support services for an extended period of time at an unknown date in the future.

The business continuity and pandemic plans developed by investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities are designed to protect the people working for them and to ensure energy operations and infrastructure are supported properly throughout an emergency.

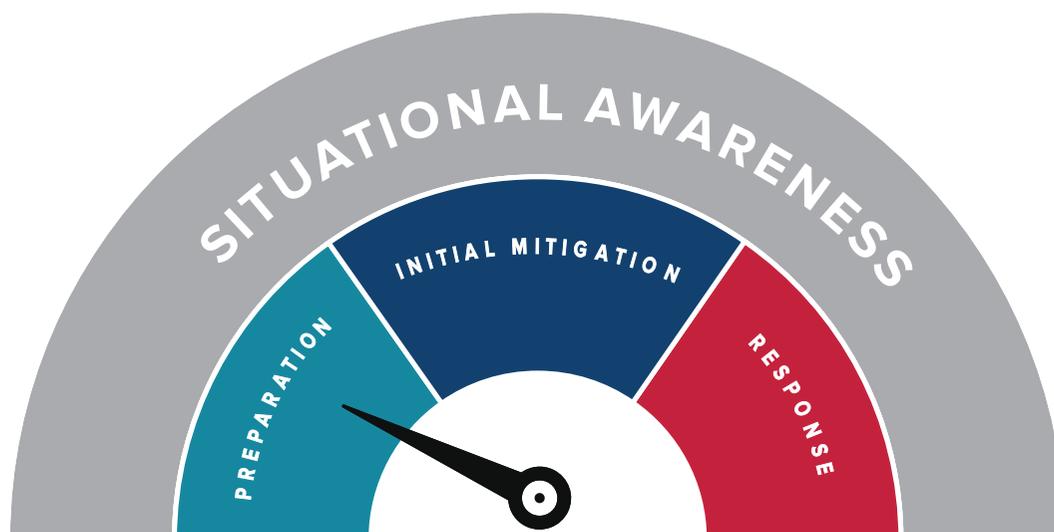
This document is a resource for electric power industry leaders to guide informed localized decisions in response to the COVID-19 global health emergency. It highlights data points, stakeholders, and options to consider in making decisions about operational status, while protecting the health and safety of employees, customers, and communities.

This document will evolve as public health officials and other government sources provide additional data and more is known about COVID-19.

Disclaimer

This document does not constitute legal advice. All examples and anecdotes are offered for illustrative purposes only. Users of this document should consult with their own legal and operational experts when making any and all decisions about responses to COVID-19 and its corollary effects.

The information and guidance herein are current as of March 10, 2020.



Stages of COVID-19 Mitigation and Response

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities will maintain regular situational awareness of critical information that will inform preparation, mitigation, and response actions, including:

- COVID infection rates, including number of current cases and deaths impacting:
 - local communities served
 - employees or immediate family members
 - contractor or vendor operations, personnel, or immediate family members
- Public health emergency declarations in service territory
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) travel guidelines for service territory
- School closures, including impacts to personnel with job duties that limit telework and other flexibility options
- Key accounts posture/closures
- Contractor and vendor posture
- Access to, and availability of, testing and vaccines
- Access to health care facilities and the changes in capacity of these facilities
- Industry trends based on tracking by trade organizations (APPA, EEI, NRECA), NERC, and the E-ISAC

Investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities will coordinate with:

- State/local elected/appointed officials and designees
- State/local health offices
- Key accounts, vendors, and contractors
- Local union and labor officials
- Federal government officials through the ESCC

PREPARATION

Assuming there are **no confirmed cases of coronavirus among employees or within the service territory**, investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities will consider:

- Increasing hygiene measures
- Planning for all employee telework
- Planning for sheltering-in-place at critical facilities
- Assessing stockpiles of critical materials, including food, PPE, and critical equipment or materials
- Instituting foreign travel restrictions (CDC level 2 and 3 countries)
- Increasing the frequency of messaging internally (employees) and externally (community, customers, other partners)

INITIAL MITIGATION

If there are **no confirmed cases of coronavirus among employees, but confirmed cases within the service territory/community**, investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities will consider:

- Increasing hygiene measures
- Instituting non-essential employee telework and continue planning for all employee telework
- Sheltering-in-place as appropriate at critical facilities
- Instituting domestic and foreign travel restrictions (CDC level 2 and 3 countries)
- Limiting attendance to large group events
- Maintaining internal/external messaging
- Planning for facility decontamination and remediation

RESPONSE

If there are **multiple employees with confirmed coronavirus**, investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities will consider:

- Instituting employee telework for all appropriate employees
- Sheltering-in-place at critical facilities
- Instituting domestic and foreign travel restrictions (CDC level 2 and 3 countries)
- Maintaining internal/external messaging
- Planning for facility decontamination and remediation

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

As part of their business continuity planning, investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities will consider the following:

ENTERPRISE-WIDE PLANNING

- Refreshing all business continuity plans and assessing whether the plans are robust enough to deal with workforce shortages considering loss of workers, facilities, and critical vendors and possibly technology.
- Establishing a cross-functional team to identify roles and responsibilities for stakeholder engagement and tracking of key planning indicators.
- Assessing what level of leadership should meet, and how often, to discuss recommendations and decisions.
- Identifying factors that might lead to declaring an organizational emergency, and the consequences of declaring an emergency.

- Determining who is considered an essential employee, whether employees can be required to stay at work, and what the HR/legal considerations are.

WORK-RELATED DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

- Determining at what point the organization:
 - Restricts international travel to, or transit through, CDC level 2 and 3 countries
 - Restricts or discourages all non-essential international travel, regardless of CDC assessment
 - Restricts or discourages non-essential domestic travel
- Determining whether the organization should require self-quarantine for travelers returning from CDC Level 2 and 3 countries, and when should the self-quarantine be enforced.
- Determining whether travel restrictions are limited to situations where any social distancing is difficult (i.e., train travel, metro travel, etc.).

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Benchmarking current IT capabilities to address:
 - How many log-ons can the network support at once?
 - How many people require VPN access to perform their jobs?
 - Do employees who do not normally telework need to be issued additional equipment, such as laptops?
- Determining the plan if the organization must significantly increase network capability to support more telework and how long it would take to complete the necessary upgrades.

ASSESSING EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Considering what testing guidelines/information can be provided to workers.
- Determining whether the organization may test potentially exposed employees prior to returning to work.
- Deciding how the organization will identify and inform potentially exposed co-workers, vendors, or contractors if an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19.
 - Will those who are potentially exposed be required to self-quarantine?
 - How will the organization inform local health officials?
- Determining what family support resources currently are in place and whether they need to be enhanced.

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

- Identifying what the basic daily cleaning requirements are and whether the frequency of cleaning should be increased.
 - How many times a day?
 - Where should hand-sanitizer/disinfectant wipes be placed?
- Deciding when it is appropriate for the organization to cancel or restrict large group gatherings, both internally and externally, and how a large group should be defined.
- Determining when the organization limits access to, and employs protective measures for, critical facilities.
- Deciding what type of decontamination must occur if an affected employee/vendor/contractor reports to a work location and whether the immediate area or entire facility should be shut down.
- Determining when an organization should consider implementation of employee/visitor screening at building entrances, and when visitors should be restricted from entering facilities.

MANAGEMENT OF VENDORS/ CONTRACTORS/SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS

- Determining when an organization would consider suspending in-person vendor meetings, particularly if vendors travel internationally.
- Defining what types of materials and services are critical.
- Assessing the current stockpiles of critical materials and the course of action if the stockpiles become low or are depleted.
- Identifying what plans vendors/contractors/suppliers have in place to ensure continuity of operations.

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL MESSAGING

- Determining what messaging would be provided to:
 - General employees/managers/supervisors
 - Affected employee(s)
 - Managers/supervisors of affected employee(s)
 - Co-workers of affected employee(s)
 - Others at work location of affected employee(s)
 - Externally affected/exposed stakeholders
 - Internal stakeholders
 - Media
- Deciding what additional information needs to be included in messaging and whether there are any additional notifications that need to be made.
- Establishing the frequency and cadence of communications and consideration of multiple modes of communications (e.g., emails, FAQs, portals, facility-specific messaging, etc.).

REVIEW OF GRID RELIABILITY AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE NETWORKS

- Identifying whether decisions to increase/suspend/reduce operations at key accounts will impact load balancing.
- Determining whether the organization has identified facilities critical to the operation of the energy grid and has made accommodations for sheltering-in-place at those facilities (on-site food/water/hygiene/medical, family services, personal protective equipment, etc.).
 - What enhanced facility management needs to occur to make the environment as safe as possible?
- Determining whether the organization has made accommodations for line crews that may need to respond to grid disruptions (family services, PPE, etc.).
 - What type of personal protective equipment should be provided to crews operating in areas with high numbers of infections?
- Determining whether the organization is in contact with mutual assistance networks to assess the availability of additional resources if there are not enough workers to perform critical work.
 - Could the organization support a request for assistance, and has the company shared its status with the mutual assistance networks?

ABOUT THE ESCC

The CEO-led Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC) serves as the principal liaison between the federal government and the electric power industry, with the mission of coordinating efforts to prepare for, and respond to, national-level disasters or threats to critical infrastructure. The ESCC focuses on actions and strategies that help protect the energy grid, prevent various threats from disrupting electricity service, and develop capabilities that help the sector quickly respond and recover when major incidents impact the grid.

The ESCC includes CEOs and executives from investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities, as well as their trade association leaders who represent all segments of the electric power industry. Through the ESCC, the industry works closely with its government counterparts, including senior administration officials from the White House, cabinet agencies, federal law enforcement, and national security organizations. Canadian electric company executives also are represented on the ESCC due to the international make-up of the North American energy grid.



For More Information:

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