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About this Document

The Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2) pandemic—which has resulted in unprecedented challenges for utility planning, operations, and response—has led to a recognition that organizations need to review existing epidemic/pandemic plans. This document is a resource to help utilities update or formalize their epidemic/pandemic-response plans as a complement to an overall business continuity plan. Each organization using this document should adapt definitions, roles and responsibilities, and process specifics to align with existing procedural protocols. Though focused on electric transmission organizations, the document may be adaptable to other critical infrastructure sectors and subsectors.

Due to the emergent need, there are several imbedded examples and information specifically related to COVID-19, as well as a COVID-19 appendix. Organizations using this document to create an epidemic/pandemic plan should consider whether the COVID-19 examples and information would be applicable for other types of epidemics/pandemics.

This document is intended to be complementary to other resources but has a specific and granular focus on operational aspects. Examples of related resources include, but are not limited to: ESCC Resource Guide, DOE Pandemic Response Plan, and COVID-19-specific websites (FERC, DHS, OSHA, and others).

This document cites multiple sources that, themselves, will likely be evolving. Every attempt will be made to cite a specific version of such other documents to be clear which information was used herein. This document will be reviewed and updated on a periodic basis over the next few months, with a formal after-action review and update after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, with the goal of continuous improvement as a resource for any generic epidemic/pandemic-response plan.

About the Contributors

NATF
The North American Transmission Forum (NATF) promotes excellence in the reliability, resiliency, and security of the electric transmission system. The NATF is built on the principle that the open and candid exchange of information among its members is the key to continuously improving the operation of transmission systems in the U.S. and Canada. NATF members include investor-owned, state-authorized, municipal, cooperative, U.S. federal, and Canadian provincial utilities, and ISOs/RTOs. For more information visit: http://www.natf.net.

DOE
Established in 1977, the United States Department of Energy (DOE) is a cabinet-level department of the Federal Government whose mission is to ensure America’s security and prosperity by addressing its energy, environmental and nuclear challenges through transformative science and technology. DOE’s responsibilities include maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent and reducing the threat of nuclear proliferation, overseeing the United States energy supply, energy conservation, energy-related research, radioactive waste disposal, and domestic energy production. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, DOE has worked closely and continuously with industry, across a number of initiatives, such as the development of this plan, to ensure that our Nation’s lights remain on.

FERC
The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is an independent federal agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas, and oil. FERC also reviews proposals to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and interstate natural gas pipelines as well as licenses for hydropower projects. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has worked closely with industry and its government partners to provide regulatory relief and collaborative support.

Please note: FERC’s contributions to this document were made by FERC staff and do not necessarily represent the views of the Commission or any individual Commissioner.

NERC
The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) is a not-for-profit international regulatory authority whose mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid. NERC develops and enforces Reliability Standards; annually assesses seasonal and long-term reliability; monitors the bulk power system through system awareness; and educates, trains, and certifies industry personnel. NERC’s area of responsibility spans the continental United States, Canada, and the northern portion of Baja California, Mexico. NERC is the Electric Reliability Organization (ERO) for North America, subject to oversight by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and governmental authorities in Canada. NERC’s jurisdiction includes users, owners, and operators of the bulk power system, which serves more than 400 million people.
1. Purpose

An epidemic/pandemic response plan, which is intended to be complementary to an organization’s business or operations continuity plans, focuses on planning/preparedness, response, and recovery activities that are specific to the outbreak of a severe epidemic/pandemic. In view of the unpredictable effects, variables, and potential consequences of an epidemic/pandemic event, an effective response will depend on flexible and scalable management strategies and preventive measures taken in advance of widespread illness and absenteeism in the workforce, along with travel and personal interaction restrictions that impair normal business operations.

An epidemic/pandemic response plan provides guidance and direction to promote and protect the health and safety of personnel and staff by implementing strategies to ensure the secure and uninterrupted conduct of mission-critical operations, business, and supporting functions identified in business or operations continuity plans.
2. Scope and Objectives

This document is applicable to the electric transmission organization.

Plan objectives include the following:

- **Health and safety**
  - Maintaining a healthy work environment for transmission operations employees and offering guidance to contain and minimize the spread of contamination in the workplace
  - Protecting the health and safety of employees and their families

- **Security**
  - Maintaining the cyber and physical security of operations with special considerations to the distraction and challenges imposed by an epidemic/pandemic

- **Communications**
  - Communicating epidemic/pandemic preparedness and response guidance
  - Providing clear direction on how the organization will execute an epidemic/pandemic response plan
  - Ensuring effective communication to personnel and staff, as well as to the larger community during an epidemic/pandemic

- **Preparedness**
  - Identifying roles and responsibilities, oversight structure, and associated chain of command for critical management and essential personnel
  - Identifying/establishing lines of succession for critical management and essential personnel

- **Response**
  - Maintaining continuity of critical processes and essential business functions during epidemic/pandemic events
  - Providing support of personnel and staff, and their families, needed for continuity of operations of essential business functions

- **Recovery**
  - Implementing orderly recovery and the resumption of normal operations as conditions and the available workforce permits following a severe epidemic/pandemic event
3. Definition of Terms\(^1\)

**Action Levels**

As outlined in the DOE Recommended Action Matrix for Pandemic Influenza, action levels are keyed to the severity of an epidemic/pandemic, where “Action Level 1” is the least severe and “Action Level 3” is the most severe.

**Alternating control center**

The practice in which operations personnel are split between multiple control centers (e.g., a primary control center and a backup control center) to avoid contact between individuals working days and those working nights. Alternating control centers might be used when personnel are living at home (under shelter-in-place or less restrictive conditions) or during sequestration.

**Center for Disease Control (CDC)**

A U.S. Federal agency under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). CDC’s main goal is to protect public health and safety through the control and prevention of disease, injury, and disability in the U.S. and internationally. The CDC focuses national attention on developing and applying disease control and prevention.

**Epidemic**

Refers to an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in that population in that area. An epidemic may be just as or more serious than a pandemic, but in a more localized area. A pandemic has widespread, global impacts.

**Essential employees**

[Organizations using the document should insert their definition of essential employees. Refer to the DHS Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce\(^2\)]

**Monitoring**

Ongoing practices to detect symptoms of a particular disease or condition once personnel have entered an area. Monitoring techniques may be like those used for screening; the key differentiator is that monitoring continues after the individual has entered the facility. Reliance on an individual to self-identify that he or she is not feeling well or is experiencing symptoms is not monitoring in this context.

**Pandemic**

Refers to an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.

\(^1\) Some definitions adapted from “Coronavirus (COVID-19) glossary: 21 terms to know”; definitions for epidemic and pandemic are from the CDC: [https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dsepd/ss1978/lesson1/section11.html](https://www.cdc.gov/csels/dsepd/ss1978/lesson1/section11.html)

\(^2\) See: [https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19](https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19) (although the publication is specific to COVID-19, the guidance is generic)
Screening
A series of questions or assessments to determine if an individual should be allowed access to company facilities or certain areas of the facility, such as a control center. In the case of COVID-19, screening may include taking the individual’s temperature and asking questions about possible exposure to someone with confirmed or suspected infection. Reliance on an individual to self-identify that he or she is not feeling well or is experiencing symptoms is not screening in this context.

Self-quarantine
The practice of isolating yourself from others until it is considered safe to return to public life. People who suspect they might have been exposed to a disease-causing pathogen might be asked to self-quarantine for a time appropriate for the particular disease.

Sequester
The housing of essential employees (e.g., system operators) in a location provided by an employer with the intent of limiting the opportunity for the employees to contract an infectious disease, thus ensuring that the employees are available to perform certain critical business processes. Sequestration may take place at an employee’s duty station or in an off-site location. Situation dependent, employees may be invited to bring family members into sequestration. Contact between those in sequestration and those not sequestered (e.g., other employees, food service and other vendors, family, and the public) is prevented or highly restricted, as any such contact unnecessarily exacerbates the risk of exposure to disease, running counter to the rationale behind sequestration.

Employees who exit the sequestration area must undergo special precautions upon reentry, and, in the event that they are expected to return to again sequester, may be asked to shelter in place in the interim.

Sequestration area
Facilities and areas used to isolate those under sequestration. This includes the living area for the operators, and in most cases, the primary and backup control centers.

Shelter-in-place
The practice of staying home except to buy essentials such as food, gas, or medicine, and minimizing contact with people outside of your immediate household. May occur by government request, government order, by request from employer, on advice from a medical provider, or by personal choice. May also be identified as a stay-at-home order.

Social distancing
The practice of maintaining distance between oneself and other people (at least six feet in the case of COVID-19, per CDC guidance), avoiding crowds and gatherings, and limiting or cancelling all unnecessary travel to reduce the spread of disease.

Testing
The practice of using blood, urine, saliva, mucus or some other bodily fluid to determine if someone either has a specific condition or has been exposed to a particular infectious disease.
4. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities inserted below are similar to the FEMA Incident Command System (ICS) structure, which offers a format for designation of roles and responsibilities with applicability beyond the COVID-19 event. The ICS is used universally, making working with external organizations much easier. The entry-level trainings for the ICS are free and available on the FEMA website.

Executive Emergency Management
High-level decision-making responsibilities for this epidemic/pandemic response plan, including determining when to implement the plan and escalation/de-escalation between action levels. The team consists of senior management and executives from each area, as applicable, along with other responsible managers as deemed appropriate. Responsibilities of this team also include overseeing the implementation of strategies or preventive measures necessary in advance of an outbreak in the workforce.

Emergency Response Team (Operations / Business Continuity)
Managing the response actions during emergencies directed by the action levels determined by Executive Emergency Management.

This group is comprised of management-level personnel with the responsibility for directing and implementing actions to deal with an epidemic/pandemic event. The Emergency Response Team consists of:

- Operations management and supervision
- Emergency response management
- IT management
- Human resources management
- Supply chain management
- Public affairs and corporate relations management
- Safety, security, occupational health management

Among other actions, the Emergency Response Team will do the following:

- Track the local, regional, and national status and progress of an epidemic/pandemic and keep the other responsible managers informed.
- Coordinate the tracking and status reporting of regional or organization-wide operations and the rates of infection and absenteeism in the workforce.
- Advise other responsible managers on specific actions necessary for the implementation of the plan or other contingencies based on severity of the outbreak locally or regionally, status or potential effect on the continuity of operations, and the health status and functional stability of the workforce.
• Meet, as the situation warrants, to deliberate the status and impact of the epidemic/pandemic locally or regionally and develop or consider additional actions or contingencies in response to the situation based on the potential impact on the workforce and continuity of operations.

• Ensure that employees are kept informed of the situation as an epidemic/pandemic evolves, any changes in policies or procedures, and the status of operations by all available methods and media.
  o For example, conduct daily safety briefings prior to shift work or field workers going on service calls and develop an internal website with FAQs that are updated once a day on PPE guidance and other mitigation requirements.

• Ensure unity of message via clear and open communications to employees, families, stakeholders, and the community
  o As new information regarding the disease and situation becomes available, disseminate accurate, timely information

• Coordinate the recovery and return-to-normal operations as the effects of an epidemic/pandemic subside.

Further details on specific preparation and response duties are outlined in Section 6: Preparation and Mitigation Strategies and in Section 7: Response Actions
5. Assumptions
A virus spreads in the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread, mainly through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with a virus, but can also be spread by touching infected objects and then touching your nose or mouth. As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, outbreaks may have significant impacts on business, commerce, government agencies, and the health care system, and can be exacerbated by the absence of readily available vaccines.

General Assumptions

- **Virus**

  - In general, the workplace, schools, child-care facilities, restaurants, or any place where large numbers of people gather or frequent, will all act as “points of contact and infection transmission” where the virus can be easily spread person-to-person.

  - In the absence of a vaccination or anti-viral drugs to promote immunity, susceptibility to infection is nearly universal, resulting in sustained person-to-person transmission with unusually high rates of illness and mortality.

  - Infection and illness from one strain of a virus does not provide immunity from infection and illness from another strain of the same virus.

  - On average, infected individuals will transmit the infection to at least 2 or more other persons.

  - The clinical disease attack rate may be 30 percent or higher. The illness rates will be highest among certain groups denoted as having increased levels of risk. Among working adults, an average of 20 to 50 percent will become ill during a given wave of infection and illness.

  - Some individuals will become infected but not develop clinically significant symptoms. Asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic individuals can still transmit infection to others and may develop immunity to subsequent infection as a result.

  - The first and most severe wave of an epidemic/pandemic will generally last 6 to 8 weeks, with subsequent waves of infection and illness of similar duration. Historically, the largest and most severe waves have occurred in the fall and winter months, but neither the seasonality nor the duration of an outbreak cannot be predicted with certainty.

  - The stages of onset for an epidemic/pandemic have historically occurred sequentially, though they may overlap or occur so rapidly as to appear simultaneous or being skipped.

- **Healthcare**

  - The number of hospitalizations will depend on the infection rate of the virus. Risk groups for severe and fatal infection cannot be predicted with certainty, but are likely to include infants, the elderly, pregnant women, and persons with underlying chronic medical conditions.

  - The public health and health care system in general may become overwhelmed as the number of individuals seeking medical care or those requiring hospitalization rise as the clinical disease attack rate increases.
• Vaccinations
  o A vaccine (epidemic/pandemic-specific strain) will not be available for distribution in the near term after the clinical confirmation of sustained human-to-human epidemic/pandemic influenza transmission.

• Antiviral medications
  o Strains of potentially epidemic/pandemic influenza virus may respond to existing antiviral medications. During the buildup of a disease outbreak, the CDC will provide guidance to public health authorities and to healthcare providers regarding the projected effectiveness of antiviral medications on the particular strain(s) of influenza causing the outbreak.
  o If the strain of the virus is susceptible to treatment with anti-viral drugs, high demand may lead to shortages of those drugs. In addition, access to anti-viral drugs may initially be limited or in short supply, or later prove to be ineffective.

Workforce Assumptions
• Staffing
  o Staffing and related actions necessary to counter the effects of an epidemic/pandemic will differ considerably in detail and execution from other events noted in a business-continuity plan. In general, standard business-continuity planning and strategies will not apply entirely, as the risks and disruptions may exist at every level of business, commerce, and society nationally.
  o A sufficient number of critical personnel will need to be available to ensure the safety, security, operation and maintenance of critical systems, facilities, and infrastructure. Therefore, some essential personnel or designated alternates must be relied upon to physically report to work for the duration of an epidemic/pandemic.

• Absenteeism
  o A severe epidemic/pandemic could affect up to 50 percent of the workforce at the peak of the epidemic/pandemic cycle and may rapidly infect entire groups (clusters) of employees who work in close proximity or share the workspace, furnishings, and equipment.
  o Rates of absenteeism will depend on the severity of the epidemic/pandemic. In severe cases, absenteeism attributable to illness, the need to care for ill family members, or fear of infection may reach 50 percent during the peak weeks of a community outbreak, with lower rates before and after the peak. In addition, certain public health measures enacted (e.g., school and day care closures, quarantines) may increase rates of absenteeism.
  o High rates of absenteeism, illness, or mortality could threaten the functioning of multiple national critical infrastructure sectors, the movement of goods and services, and the operations of critical private sector businesses, institutions, as well as government agencies.

• Resources
  o Significant supply chain interruptions and transportation disruptions will likely occur, affecting basic services and leading to shortages of essential supplies for varying periods of time. This
could have significant ramifications for the economy, security, and the basic functioning of society.

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) and others supplies may not be readily available.

- Other
  - Some geographical areas of the nation may see significantly greater rates of infection and absenteeism in the workforce in comparison to others during the course of epidemic/pandemic waves or cycles. This variance may also be present between regional offices.
  - Stringent restrictions (e.g., during an imposed community quarantine) on the non-essential movement of the population may be imposed by federal, state, local, or provincial authorities, potentially encumbering the movement of essential personnel to and from their assigned work locations, especially if work locations are in access-denied areas. This may require continuous liaison and coordination with federal, state, local, tribal, or provincial public health and law enforcement organizations in order to ensure that these personnel are not unnecessarily detained or restricted from travel to and from their assigned work locations.
6. Preparation and Mitigation Strategies

The organization will work to mitigate and prepare for an epidemic/pandemic by disseminating and implementing this plan as a supporting document to the organization’s business-continuity plans, along with providing relevant training and planning/conducting exercises to test employee capabilities and system functionality. The organization will also continue to emphasize and promote public health and other non-vaccine, non-drug measures within the organization to prevent the transmission of infection, consistent with public health guidance.

Preparation Strategies

While the organization has existing business-continuity plans, the unique circumstances, and potential consequences of a severe epidemic/pandemic necessitate the development of additional strategies for the management of and response to such events. Responsible managers at all levels should be prepared to implement flexible and scalable administrative, operational, and security response strategies that are designed to decrease the spread of infection in the workforce, counter the potential impact, and ensure the continuity of operations for the duration of an epidemic/pandemic.

- Tracking and screening of employees’ health
  - Develop mechanisms for tracking the cause of employee absences and workplace-contact tracing of employees with confirmed cases.
  - Continuously monitor and track known cases and rates of absenteeism in work groups and the workforce in general to assess the potential impact on operations, particularly in work groups vital to the conduct of mission-critical operations, business, and support functions. Rates of infection and absenteeism among employees in a work group can escalate rapidly and cannot be predicted but should be anticipated and planned for in advance.
  - Develop procedures for tracking the health of employees that must travel to high-risk areas and restrict non-essential business travel, as appropriate.
  - Develop procedures for the screening of employees and visitors from high-risk areas prior to permitting their access to workspaces where mission-critical operations, business, and support functions are conducted (e.g., control centers). Procedures should be developed using best practices and public health guidance.
- Identification and staffing of “essential” positions
  - Identify and prioritize the role of each organizational element and associated functions or operations in terms of “essential” and “non-essential,” in the event a severe epidemic/pandemic preempts the ability to sustain normal operations. Consider limiting or reducing the conduct of non-essential functions and operations, as advisable or as directed, under conditions of increasing risk and unusually high rates of illness and absenteeism in the workforce. In this case, non-essential operations should be curtailed, temporarily suspended, or conducted remotely and the focus should be shifted to the conduct of essential operations with the available workforce. There may be considerations with respect to contractual arrangements or unions that need to be accounted for in this decision.
- Develop contingency plans for the temporary replacement of employees in organizational elements or work groups tasked with the conduct of mission-critical operations, business, and support functions, resulting from unusually high rates of illness and absenteeism during the course of an epidemic/pandemic wave (e.g., control centers). This may require the temporary augmentation of staffing in an area experiencing a particularly severe rate of illness and absenteeism, with volunteer staff from other areas with relatively low rates of illness and absenteeism.

- The use of public transportation should be avoided for essential personnel whenever possible; given the high transmissibility of viruses that reach an epidemic/pandemic level, the use of personal or company vehicles should be strongly encouraged or mandated. Social distancing practices appropriate to the pathogen should still be followed in non-public transportation.

• Employee work schedules and compensation
  
  - Develop work schedule plans for essential employees.
  
  - Develop shift-change plans and protocols for essential employees working shift jobs (e.g., control room operators and transmission field personnel).
  
  - Develop staggered shifts or flexible working hours to limit interpersonal contact in the workforce. This strategy is fundamentally the most effective method to control and limit the spread of infection and illness in the workforce. However, to be effective they must be implemented before escalating rates of infection, illness, and absenteeism become a crisis.
  
  - Develop plans for financial compensation of essential employees (e.g., lump sum payments, bump up in hourly pay rates).

• Quarantining and sequestering of employees (See Appendix 3: Supplemental Information for more details)
  
  - Develop plans for self-quarantining of essential employees; self-quarantining would be an employee going into isolation at home for the CDC recommended timeframe (e.g., 7 days, 14 days) prior to reporting to work.
  
  - Develop plans for shelter-in-place orders or sequestering of essential employees, including any special provisions for providing support services (e.g., food service, prescription delivery) to these essential employees.
  
  - Develop plans for maintaining access control and allowing delivery of essentials in and out of the sequester area. Plans should include details for safe delivery of products or services, such as special delivery containers, use of masks, and ingress,egress procedures.

• Family support for essential employees
  
  - Develop plans to provide support to families of essential employees who may be called on to work in high-risk areas or who may be sequestered. These plans should consider things such as family lodging, food, and medical support as well as mechanisms to provide for communication between essential employees and their families.
• Identification of key supply chain requirements
  o Identify key supply chain requirements and take appropriate measures in advance to ensure availability of critical materials and supplies from vendors and suppliers who may also experience disruptions in manufacturing or delivery capabilities during a severe epidemic/pandemic.
    ▪ Such considerations will likely extend to PPE, which may include face shields, surgical masks, hand sanitizer, etc.
  o Identify requirements and stockpile specialized personal hygiene supplies (e.g., Food and Drug Administration approved anti-viral hand sanitizers) for use by employees to help protect, control, and prevent the spread of infection in the workforce for the duration of an epidemic/pandemic, as appropriate and in advance of the normal flu and cold season.

• Workplace sanitation, social distancing, and related activities
  o Consistent with public health guidance, develop procedures for increased sanitary measures in common areas and workspaces, including provisions for providing surface disinfectants to employees, facility maintenance, and/or outsourced custodial services to help control and prevent the spread of infection in the workforce. Such measures include, but are not limited to:
    ▪ Frequent disinfecting of high-touch surfaces by a cleaning service;
    ▪ Disinfecting of phones and desks at the beginning and end of shifts;
    ▪ If possible, avoid system operators using the same console as the previous shift, allowing the console to be cleaned and remain dormant for a period;
    ▪ Personal keyboard and mouse issued to each operator;
    ▪ Dedicated headsets issued to each operator.
  o Develop strategies to implement “social distancing” in the workplace.
    ▪ See Social Distancing in the “Mitigation Strategies to Limit Transmission of Illness” section below and see Appendix 3: Supplemental Information for more details of a social distancing model
  o Relax the requirement for employees to obtain written proof of illness from a physician after 3 or more days of absence on sick leave. During the course of an epidemic/pandemic, the health care system in general may be under significant strain and unable to accommodate this requirement.

• Security posture
  o Cyber: Develop strategies to maintain cyber security during the special circumstances of an epidemic/pandemic, considering the increased threat of phishing attempts and cyber attacks.
- **Physical**: Develop strategies to maintain physical security during the special circumstances of an epidemic/pandemic, such as ensuring camera sight lines are not impeded by RVs or other equipment staged for sequestration.

- **Telework/work-at-home policies**
  - Simplify policies and procedures and broadly expand the capability to facilitate telework (work-at-home) options for both “essential” and “non-essential” employees using virtual private network (VPN), virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), or similar technologies. This strategy is, without exception, the best method to implement “social distancing” in the workforce during the course of a severe epidemic/pandemic, or during any other emergency event that requires functional remote access from an alternate location to sustain employee productivity and the continuity of operations. However, telework capabilities should be fully implemented and tested prior to the occurrence of an evolving health crisis or emergency event.
  - Consider development of policies that would allow employees to take equipment and furniture home with them to increase productivity (e.g., office chairs, scanners, printers, stationary supplies, etc.).

- **Vaccinations and seasonal preparedness**
  - Implement a comprehensive employee awareness campaign to educate and keep employees informed before and during the cold and flu season, and for the duration of an escalating health crisis resulting from the outbreak of a severe epidemic/pandemic. Encourage the vaccination of all employees, as it remains the primary and most effective measure to protect, control, and potentially prevent the outbreak of infection in the workforce.
  - Develop a strategy to influence prioritization of essential-employee immunizations. It is assumed that an effective vaccine will not be available in the near term after the start of any epidemic/pandemic. When a vaccine does become available, the demand will likely exceed the supply for some time.
  - Conduct comprehensive reviews by responsible senior management to assess and ensure readiness and effectiveness of epidemic/pandemic response plans, procedures, or policies.

- **Other**
  - Provide relevant training on the epidemic/pandemic plan.
  - Conduct drills/exercises to ensure workforce readiness, such as bi-annual or annual mass telework testing.
  - Develop cyber security and physical security checklists to ensure corporate security requirements are still being met.
  - As exemplified by the COVID-19 response, organizations should work with federal, state, provincial, tribal, and local partners in order to ensure freedom of movement for key personnel.
Develop travel credentials for essential employee personnel to carry and present at access denied checkpoints during shelter-in-place order.³

- Develop preparation and implementation checklists to verify all planned actions have been performed.

**Mitigation Strategies to Limit Transmission of Illness**

Preparedness strategies are designed with the intent to stop, slow, or otherwise limit the spread of an epidemic/pandemic. Strategies include the having a stock of personal protective equipment (PPE) and advanced disseminating of information on good housekeeping tips and social distancing.

**Epidemic/Pandemic PPE**

Review industry-critical PPE needs for epidemic/pandemic planning purposes. Examples include the following:

- Nitrile gloves
- Shoe covers
- Protective clothing
- Goggles/glasses
- Hand sanitizer
- Dust masks
- Anti-bacterial soap
- Trash bags
- Wipes (anti-bacterial, alcohol, antiseptic)
- Disposable thermometers
- Batteries

**Good Household and Personal Hygiene**

- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough
- Wash your hands
- Don't share personal items
- Keep surfaces clean

³ For example, a freedom of movement package including: 1) a letter from CEO or equivalent outlining the DHS guidance and company mission, 2) a company-issued vehicle placard, 3) the March 20, 2020, memo from the Attorney General Barr instructing all US Attorneys to work with state and local partners to ensure essential workers have freedom of movement, and 4) the DHS/CISA critical employee identification memo.
• Avoid close contact with others (social distancing)

**Social Distancing**
Social distancing is a strategy where one avoids crowded places, large gatherings of people, or close contact with a group of people. In these situations, viruses can easily spread from person to person. For COVID-19, a distance of six feet is recommended to slow the spread of a disease, but increased distance is more effective.

This strategy is fundamentally the most effective method to control and limit the spread of infection and illness in the workforce. However, to be effective they must be implemented before escalating rates of infection, illness, and absenteeism become a crisis. Social distancing measures, such as limiting public gatherings and reducing operations are most effective to limit exposure to the disease if implemented before or at the onset of the disease’s entry into the organization’s workforce.

• Use telephone, secure video conferencing, or the internet to conduct as much business as possible (including within the same building).

• Cancel or postpone any travel, meetings, workshops, etc. that are not absolutely necessary.

• Consider staggered shifts or flexible working hours to further limit interpersonal contact in the workforce.

See [Appendix 3: Supplemental Information](#) for more details of a social distancing model.
7. Response Actions
In effectively meeting the management and operational challenges posed by an epidemic/pandemic, the organization’s actions will be based upon those identified in the DOE Recommended Action Matrix for Pandemic Influenza. As such, the organization has developed and adopted a modified version of this matrix. This matrix identifies three numerical action levels” that are keyed to the severity of an epidemic/pandemic, where “Action Level 1” is the least severe and “Action Level 3” the most severe.

The organization, with input from the CDC and other federal/state/provincial/tribal/local government agencies, determines the recommended Action Level by identifying the scope and severity of the epidemic/pandemic. If and when the situation warrants, the organization will notify employees of the evolving situation and recommend the appropriate actions, consistent with the corresponding Action Levels. In addition, depending on differences within the organization, it may be determined that varying Action Levels are needed, based on local and regional conditions or criticality of functions. Communications will include the necessary guidance and direction associated with a change in Action Level for the organization overall or variations for specific groups or locations.

Organizations may supplement or modify the DOE matrix if necessary.

Department of Energy Recommended Action Matrix for Pandemic (Modified)
The tables on the following pages represent the modified DOE Recommended Action Matrix for Pandemic Influenza that have been adopted by the organization. The tables briefly summarize:

- conditions and characteristics of each level
- associated planning, preparedness or response actions for the organization
- responsibilities for actions
## ACTION LEVEL 1
### VIRAL OUTBREAK
Small outbreaks of infection and person-to-person transmission.

### Response Actions
#### Managers and Supervisors

- Remain aware of the status and effects of a pandemic locally, regionally, nationally, and on operations.
- Monitor and keep the management chain informed of any evolving situation where employee absenteeism threatens to degrade the continuity of mission essential functions or critical supporting business operations.
- Ensure employees are kept informed of the status and potential effects of the pandemic and preventive measures to protect themselves, family members, and coworkers.
- Review applicable business-continuity and pandemic-response plans. Update and revise as necessary.
- Ensure that employee emergency contact rosters are up to date.
- Ensure lines of succession and delegation of authority protocols are current and understood.
- Review pandemic response plan with employees, ensuring they clearly understand their roles and responsibilities during the course of a pandemic.
- Ensure telework/telecommuting agreements are in place for personnel designated as “essential” to the continuity of operations, and relied upon to continue working from a remote location (home) as conditions warrant for the duration of pandemic.
- Review all planned work projects (e.g., computer system upgrades, construction and maintenance of T&D) for next 8-12 weeks and determine which ones are priority and need to be continued during the pandemic and which ones can be deferred until after the pandemic.
- Ensure plans for sequestering of essential employees and any support persons (e.g., food service, janitorial) who will be needed to support these essential employees are ready to be implemented. This includes things such as contracts with local hotels, etc.
- Ensure plans to provide support to families of essential employees who made be called on to work in high risk areas or who may be sequestered are ready to be implemented. These plans should consider things such as family lodging, food, and medical support as well as mechanisms to provide for communication between essential employees and their families.
- Implement self-quarantining of essential employees in anticipation of needing to move to sequestering at level 2.
- Develop specific work schedules for essential employees in anticipation of needing to move to level 2.
- Ensure “essential” personnel designated to perform telework/telecommuting are appropriately trained, equipped, proficient in the use of the applied technology, and capable of completing required work assignments or tasks from a remote location (home).
- Remain aware of applicable human resource guidelines and policies regarding sick leave and family leave policies during a pandemic.
- In the event of a CDC travel advisory, restrict non-essential business travel accordingly.
- To the extent practical, institute “social distancing” (face-to-face interaction) protocols and limit attendance or hosting of conferences, and restrict non-essential business travel.
- To the extent practical, promote adherence to recommended preventive measures, such as the use of hand and surface sanitizers, sneeze and cough etiquette, and influenza vaccinations.
- Coordinate with public affairs/relations to develop and implement communications plan to ensure consistent messaging and comprehensive outreach.

### Response Actions

#### Departments/Offices of Safety, Security, Occupational Health

- Monitor specialized information resources for evolving trends and health alerts (i.e., Centers for Disease Control, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, and DOE Headquarters).
- Monitor the status and effects of the pandemic locally, regionally, and nationally and keep the management chain informed of any evolving situation that could threaten the health of the workforce and degrade the continuity of operations.
- Review applicable business-continuity and pandemic-response plans. Update and revise as necessary.
- Begin planning for the phased implementation of business-continuity and pandemic-response plans, in conjunction with organizational senior management teams.
- Maintain currency on known or potential criminal activity and terrorist threats. Ensure the continuation of facility security, access control, and critical infrastructure protection functions.
- Brief senior management on the nature of any potential health or security threats.
- In conjunction with safety committees, develop and promote pandemic awareness campaigns to keep employees informed on the symptoms of influenza, the potential effects of a pandemic, and preventive measures to protect themselves, family members, and coworkers.
- Promote the use of hand and surface sanitizers and coordinate their procurement and distribution to the workforce.

### Response Actions

#### Administrative Officers/Human Resource

- Monitor specialized information resources for evolving trends and health alerts (i.e., Centers for Disease Control, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, and DOE Headquarters).
- Monitor the status and effects of the pandemic locally, regionally, and nationally and keep the management chain informed of any evolving situation that could threaten the health of the workforce and degrade the continuity of operations.
- Review applicable business-continuity and pandemic-response plans. Update and revise as necessary.
- Begin planning for the phased implementation of business-continuity and pandemic-response plans, in conjunction with organizational senior management teams.
- Maintain currency on known or potential criminal activity and terrorist threats. Ensure the continuation of facility security, access control, and critical infrastructure protection functions.
- Brief senior management on the nature of any potential health or security threats.
- In conjunction with safety committees, develop and promote pandemic awareness campaigns to keep employees informed on the symptoms of influenza, the potential effects of a pandemic, and preventive measures to protect themselves, family members, and coworkers.
- Promote the use of hand and surface sanitizers and coordinate their procurement and distribution to the workforce.
➢ Remain aware of the status and effects of a pandemic locally, regionally, and nationally.
➢ Develop or revise telework policies and procedures for personnel designated as "essential" to the continuity of operations and relied upon to continue working from a remote location (home) as conditions warrant for the duration of pandemic.
➢ Develop policies for the temporary replacement of employees in organizational elements or work groups tasked with the conduct of mission essential functions and critical supporting business operations, resulting from unusually high rates of illness and absenteeism during a pandemic wave.
➢ Develop policies for compensation of essential employees
➢ Develop or revise policies and procedures on telework for designated “essential or critical” personnel during a pandemic or business-continuity emergency event.
➢ Develop policies concerning the use of administrative, annual, and sick leave during a pandemic; ensure management and employees are informed.
➢ Coordinate the scheduling and administration of influenza vaccinations to the workforce.
➢ Monitor CDC travel advisories and develop policies for the use of administrative or annual leave following the return of employees from business or personal travel from regions or areas identified in the travel advisories.

Response Actions
Information Technology

➢ Develop, implement, and test the capability to support enhanced telework/telecommuting using virtual private networks or remote desktop protocol for designated “essential” personnel.
➢ Develop associated training or support mechanisms for “essential” personnel designated to perform telework.
➢ Begin planning for the implementation and support of telework as the situation warrants, or for the duration of a severe pandemic.
### ACTION LEVEL 2
**VIRAL OUTBREAK**
Large outbreaks of infection and person-to-person transmission.

#### Response Actions
**Managers and Supervisors**
- Senior managers begin evaluation of the situation and plan or consider the phased implementation of applicable elements of business-continuity, business-resumption, and pandemic-response plans, dependent on local and regional conditions.
- Remain aware of the status and effects of the pandemic locally, regionally, nationally, and on operations.
- Monitor and keep the management chain informed of any evolving situation where employee absenteeism threatens to degrade the continuity of mission essential functions or critical supporting business operations.
- Ensure employees are kept informed of the status, potential effects of a pandemic, and preventive measures to protect themselves, family members, and coworkers.
- Implement the full-time use of telework/telecommuting for personnel designated as “essential” to the continuity of operations as conditions warrant, or for the duration of pandemic to develop proficiency and ensure functional capabilities.
- Implement sequestering of essential employees.
- Implement family support programs for essential employees.
- Defer planned work projects (e.g., computer system upgrades, construction and maintenance of T&D) not deemed to be critical per review performed in level 1.
- To the extent practical, increase the use of “social distancing” (face-to-face interaction) protocols and the restriction of non-essential business travel.
- To the extent practical, continue to promote adherence to recommended preventive measures.
- Coordinate with public affairs/relations to develop and implement communication plan to ensure consistent messaging and comprehensive outreach.

#### Response Actions
**Departments/Offices of Safety, Security, Occupational Health (depending on organization)**
➢ Continue monitoring specialized resources for evolving trends and health alerts.
➢ Continue monitoring the status and effects of the pandemic locally, regionally, and nationally and keep the management chain informed of any evolving situation that may threaten to degrade the continuity of operations.
➢ Brief senior management on the nature of any potential health or security threats.
➢ Plan or consider the phased implementation of applicable elements of business-continuity, business-resumption, and pandemic-response plans, in conjunction with organizational senior management teams.
➢ Maintain currency on known or potential criminal activity and terrorist threats. Ensure the continuation of facility security, access control, and critical infrastructure protection functions.
➢ In conjunction with safety committees, continue to promote the use of preventive measures and keep employees informed of the situation and the potential impact of the pandemic.

Response Actions

Administrative Officers/Human Resource

➢ Remain aware of the status and effects of the pandemic locally, regionally, or nationally. Make any necessary changes to existing policies or procedures as the situation warrants.
➢ Continue monitoring CDC travel advisories and make changes to existing policies as necessary.
➢ Consider providing additional accommodations for individuals who identify themselves as “high risk,” for complications associated with illness from influenza, by reducing their social contact with the workforce at large to extent practical.

Response Actions

Information Technology

➢ Continue to support or potentially expand telework/telecommuting capabilities for designated “essential” personnel for the duration of the pandemic.
➢ Ensure continued technical and service support for mission essential functions and supporting critical business operations.

Response Actions

Procurement/Budget

➢ Ensure purchasing and vendor services are in place and ready to use. (Procurement)
➢ Ensure emergency funds are available for essential personnel. (Budget)
# ACTION LEVEL 3
**SEVERE PANDEMIC OUTBREAK**
Increased and sustained transmission in the general population nationally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Actions</th>
<th>MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Senior management teams continue to evaluate the situation and business-continuity and pandemic-response plans, as appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Ensure the continuity of mission essential functions and supporting critical business operations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Remain aware of the status and effects of the pandemic locally, regionally, nationally, and on operations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Monitor and keep the management chain informed of any evolving situation where employee absenteeism threatens to degrade the continuity of mission essential functions or critical supporting business operations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Ensure employees are kept informed of the situation and potential effects of the pandemic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ To the extent practical, continue the use of “social distancing” (face-to-face interaction) protocols and the restriction of non-essential business travel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ To the extent practical, continue to promote adherence to recommended preventive measures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Coordinate with public affairs/relations to develop and implement communication plan to ensure consistent messaging and comprehensive outreach.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Actions</th>
<th>Departments/Offices of Safety, Security, Occupational Health (depending on organization)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Continue monitoring specialized resources for evolving trends and health alerts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Continue monitoring the status and effects of the pandemic locally, regionally, and nationally and keep the management chain informed of any evolving situation that may threaten to degrade the continuity of operations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Brief senior management on the nature of any potential health or security threats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Implement applicable elements of business-continuity and pandemic-response plans, in conjunction with organizational senior management teams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Maintain currency on known or potential criminal activity and terrorist threats. Ensure the continuation of facility security, access control, and critical infrastructure protection functions.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ In conjunction with safety committees, continue to promote the use of preventive measures and keep employees informed of the situation and the potential impact of the pandemic.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Response Actions
**Administrative Officers/Human Resource**
- Remain aware of the status and effects of the pandemic locally, regionally, or nationally. Make any necessary changes to existing policies or procedures as the situation warrants.
- Continue to monitor CDC travel advisories and make changes to existing policies as necessary.

### Response Actions
**Information Technology**
- Continue to support or potentially expand telework/telecommuting capabilities for designated “essential” personnel for the duration of the pandemic.
- Ensure continued technical and service support for mission essential functions and critical business operations.

### Response Actions
**Procurement/Budget**
- Support the need for expenses, purchases and vendor services to ensure "essential" personnel have logistical items to continue working at the organization’s facilities.
8. Recovery Actions

The goal of recovery is to resume normal operations and services in a deliberate and prioritized manner. The onset to the peak of the epidemic/pandemic occurs over a period-of-time, depending on the characteristics specific to the contagion. Similarly, the recovery will occur over a period-of-time. Generally, the same levels and triggers as used during escalation can be considered, in reverse, for the recovery process. Key elements of the restoration will be de-escalating in a manner and at a pace such that electric transmission reliability and resilience are steadily increased and the epidemic/pandemic does not reemerge, especially within essential functions or staff.

General organizational actions will include, but are not limited to:

- staying informed of CDC guidelines and adjusting action as needed;
- staying informed of federal, state, provincial, and local government restrictions
- continuing screening and health checks as appropriate;
- remaining vigilant for signs of illness returning to employees and the community;
- restocking depleted supplies;
- returning to usual job functions and scopes of practice;
- hiring and training, as needed;
- continuing to promote principles of good household and hygiene;
- analyzing data from the epidemic/pandemic and drafting or contributing to “after-action” reports and corrective-action measures;
- completing work for financial reimbursement, as appropriate, through national emergency plans.

Additional, tactical actions the organization can consider are as follows:

- maintaining significant portions of the workforce as remote, consistent with adequate fulfilment of job functions;
- restricting visitors, in particular to functional areas essential to reliability and resiliency;
- limiting staff travel and gatherings of greater than X persons;
- continued use of periodic, mandatory health questionnaires, appropriate personal protective equipment, and effective mass screening (infrared temperature monitoring at ingress).

Additionally, for employees who suffered losses during the outbreak, support should be provided to help deal with the associated grief and stress. Group grief counseling should be considered for work groups where employees have died. This also provides a reminder of the opportunities for further individual counseling.
9. Other Resources

Appendix 1: Template

Below is a template approach for developing a response plan with a suggested list of sections to include and a brief description of each section.

### Introduction

Include a brief introduction to note why the organization has an epidemic/pandemic response plan.

### Purpose

Include a purpose statement to explain what the plan is designed to accomplish.

### Scope and Objectives

State the scope (e.g., to which parts of the organization the plan applies) and some specific objectives (related to health and safety, preparedness, etc.).

### Plan/Document Organization

Include a table of contents or list of topics.

### Definition of Terms

Include definitions for certain terms that may be open to interpretation or have a specific meaning in relation to the plan. When possible, base definitions on input from sources with expertise in the topic.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Define which parts of the organization are responsible for developing and implementing the plan.

### Assumptions

Include a set of assumptions to help baseline organizational understanding of a pandemic and its potential impacts (on the general public and the organization). Gather input from governmental and other credible sources and update the section periodically or when emergent/new information becomes available. For example, COVID-19 impacts may not have aligned with previous pandemic risk assumptions.

### Preparedness and Mitigation Strategies

Include details for how the organization will prepare for a pandemic and limit the spread of illness.
Response Actions

Include a set of actions to take when a pandemic is imminent or underway. This section should detail what actions are necessary at stages of the pandemic. Companies will generally use a multi-step plan, especially transmission operators (organizations) with a control center.

Recovery Actions

Include a section on recovery actions to support an orderly return to normal operations and initiate follow-up actions to learn from the pandemic and the organizational response to the situation.

Other Resources

Include a section on where to find related information, such as governmental websites.

Supplemental Information

Include supplemental information, as appropriate, in specific sections of the pandemic response plan or in an appendix.
Appendix 2: COVID-19 Actions
Information in this appendix was created from NATF member inputs during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is subject to change as the situation evolves.

Control Center Response Plan
Level 0 (Awareness)
• Ongoing meetings of corporate and/or division epidemic/pandemic oversight committee
• Monitor national, state/provincial/tribal, and local government guidance
• Review epidemic/pandemic plan; update contact information as needed, confirm critical business functions, and identify critical employees
• Start to leverage subject-matter experts outside of the electric industry to start preparing (i.e., epidemiologists, health care professionals, epidemic/pandemic response teams, etc.)

Level 1 (Limited Risk of Community Transmission)
• Limit business-related travel; staff who have personally traveled, or have members of their household who have travelled, to an area with an active travel notice or a known area with sustained community transmission, should notify supervisor and may be asked to self-quarantine. Similarly, employees may be asked to be tested for infection prior to returning to work.
• Implement social distancing in the workplace
• Review hygiene recommendations
• Disinfect workstations at shift turnover and in the event an operator takes ill during shift
• If possible, assign workstations to specific operators (avoid sharing workstations)
• Assign personal headsets for operators
• Ask employees who are ill to stay home
• Cleaning/disinfect high-touch areas daily
• Use a checklist to ensure compliance with requirements
• In-person operator training cycle cancelled; use CBT and/or telepresence if needed

Level 2 (Sustained Community Transmission)
• No visitors to facilities
• No in-person meetings
• Operations personnel that are not on shift work from home
• All off-shift operations staff advised on precautions to take at home
• Control room and support personnel use separate entrances, kitchens, and bathrooms
• Limit control room entry to tasks necessary to maintain system reliability
• Limit entry of control room and control room support personnel into other areas of building
• Plan for operator sequestration

Level 3 (Widespread Community Transmission; Authorities May Declare Need to Shelter-in-Place)
• All non-operations personnel who can work from home do so
• Implement alternating control centers. Split operations personnel between primary and backup control centers. Alternate night/day between primary and backup to avoid contact between shift personnel and immediate turnover of a workstation. Alternatively, keep one control room active day and night for a period (e.g., four days) then rotate to the other control center. Staff do not rotate between sites.
• Implement at-home and/or start of shift health screening.
• Ask incoming shift to shelter-in-place at home (if not required by government order) to make sure they are available
• Prepare for operator sequestration

Sick/Healthy Control Rooms (Modified Level 3)
Since not all COVID-19 cases are severe, the concept of sick control room/healthy control room has been discussed. In this situation, one of the control rooms would be staffed by operators who are known to be infected but are asymptomatic or who have symptoms but are able to function.

Considerations for Moving to Level 3
• Community transmission in the locations around the control center or where employees live
• Exposure of any company employee to someone who tested positive

Level 4 (Extreme Community Transmission; Authorities Declare Need to Shelter-in-Place)
• Operator sequestration

Considerations for Moving to Level 4
• Percentage of community in the vicinity of the control center infected by the virus
• Potential or known positive case at the control center
• Number of volunteers available to be sequestered
• Suitability of facilities for long term sequester
• Regulatory directive
• Consider sequestration as a last option due to impact on operators being separated from families and potential fatigue (see “Sequestration Triggers” below)
Health and Medical Practices

Operator Health Screening and Monitoring
Operators and other essential personnel need to enter the control center as part of daily shift changes, rotations of sequestered operators, or to provide support for emergent issues. Practices to reduce the risk that an infected individual will be allowed into the facility include:

- health questionnaires, including previous potential exposures
- temperature checks
- testing for the specific virus, to the extent available

In addition, it is important to monitor the health of individuals working in the control room by periodically (e.g., two times per day) assessing their health in one or more ways:

- asking employee to self-identify if not feeling well or experiencing symptoms
- self-administered or medical-staff-administered temperature checks

Priority Testing for Essential Personnel

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) document “CISA Guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers” supports any claim that transmission system operators and support personnel are essential.

Responses to Positive COVID-19 Test for Control Room Operator
Example procedure for responding to an operator with a positive COVID-19 test or symptoms that suggest that the worker may have COVID-19:

1. If the employee is in the company facility, send employee home; if at home, ask the employee to remain there.
2. Notify company health and safety personnel.
3. Notify supervision.
4. Determine if other employees had close contact with the individual.⁴
   a. Consider employees on same shift and proximity to potentially infected employee.
   b. Consider if person shared workspace with other operators.
   c. Consult with company health and safety personnel to determine risk.

⁴ Close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time. Close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case or having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on).
5. Determine if conservative operations are to be implemented.
6. Determine if there is need to adjust staffing guidelines or isolation status.

Managing Health of Field Workers

- All non-essential salaried support employees working from home/remotely
- Field operations separated into geographic areas; no employees to leave assigned area without management approval
- Field employees employ social distancing except when work makes it impossible; if not possible, take extra hygiene precautions
- No congregating in office space, no groups without approval
- Work schedules adjusted to accommodate social distancing
- Contractors required to practice social distancing and have no access to crew headquarter facilities
- High-risk employees (note: may be defined differently based on a different pandemic or virus) to be sent home and will be dispatched for outage-response only
- Allow only one employee in any company vehicle at a time
- Adjust deployment of workforce between active and work-at-home or sequestered (e.g., half of workers in field, half at home)

Operator Training and Certification

Training
In order to balance the need to maintain qualifications, keep the workforce safe, and prepare them for the special circumstances of an epidemic/pandemic, the following should be considered for training:

- Tools
  - Provide training/quick reference guide on use of web conferencing software tools (e.g., WebEx, Skype, Microsoft Teams)
  - Ensure technology (e.g., laptops, servers, VPN, mobile hotspots, etc.) supports large numbers of remote workers
  - Ensure communications (e.g., phones, teleconferencing capabilities, microphones, webcams) are sufficient quality and support large numbers of remote workers
  - Develop capability to access and use simulator remotely for training

- Approach
  - Suspend in-person training
  - Provide virtual training sessions (e.g., similar to in-person sessions by the company training group, but provided via web/video conferencing)
Consider only training on critical tasks or implementing smaller, on-demand modules

- Document any deviations to regular training plan, as a result of the epidemic/pandemic
- Provide independent, online training (e.g., by purchasing NERC-approved training modules)
- Where possible, while ensuring safety and physical distancing guidelines, as well as all CDC recommended safety protocols, provide on-site apprentice skills assessment progression training

**Staffing Qualified Operators**

Beyond compliance, there is a need for adequate numbers of qualified operators to maintain the reliability and security of the transmission system. To plan for potential operator shortages due to COVID-19, the following may be considered to identify additional resources:

- Current employees who are former operators and have maintained NERC certification
- Recent retirees whose certification remains current
- Support engineers who are NERC certified
- Accelerated operator training for new operators
- “Mutual assistance” relationships with other utilities as a last resort

As noted in the “Training” section above, consider limiting training for these additional resources (personnel) on “critical” tasks in order to expedite readiness. With this approach, these personnel would be placed on shift with experienced operators to complete their on-the-job training.

**COVID-19 References**

The impacts of COVID-19 on transmission system operations can be understood only in the context of the characteristics of the disease itself and in relation to the response of governments and society.

Refer to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) or the Government of Canada Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) web pages for the latest guidance on disease characteristics, protection, cleaning, etc. and to local, and state/provincial government sources for current guidance and shelter-in-place/stay-at-home requirements.

Refer also to information and websites for other organizations with interests in the operation of electric systems and other critical infrastructure. These include, but are not limited to:

- NATF’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Resources secure page for members
- Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC) COVID-19 Information
- Department of Energy Coronavirus Hub
- DHS COVID-19: Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure

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• FERC Coronavirus Response
• Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Appendix 3: Supplemental Information

Social Distancing Model

Working adults may contract illnesses from their coworkers. Social distancing is one form of nonpharmaceutical intervention (NPI) designed to decrease the transmission of illnesses between people by minimizing exposure opportunities. This social distance model provides a comprehensive set of guidelines to minimize employee exposure to the influenza virus.

Social distancing affords opportunities to avoid contracting a virus. Social distancing, combined with other NPI, may:

- Delay an eventual increase in the number of cases, buying time for the production and distribution of vaccines
- Decrease the epidemic peak, or maximum number of people ill at the same time
- Reduce the total number of cases over the course of the epidemic

The types of social distancing are discussed below and are presented in order of implementation based on increasing levels epidemic/pandemic severity and the criticality of business processes being performed.

Suspend Group Activities. Group activities, such as meetings and presentations, often require close-quarter exposure for long periods and should be avoided if possible. If meetings can be conducted over the telephone, by email, or by other means do so. If the epidemic/pandemic is severe enough, all group activities will be suspended.

- Keep in-person meetings short
- Maintain at least 6 feet distance between participants
- Utilize alternate meeting options if possible

Suspend Non-Critical Business Processes. During an emergency, the company does not need to perform all business processes. To improve employee safety non-critical business processes will be suspended, allowing employees to stay home. Business processes will be resumed when safe to do so. Employees will receive periodic communications from their managers during this time.

Employees with special skill sets may be asked to support critical business processes that require additional employees.

Increase Physical Distance. Increasing the physical distance between employees during an epidemic/pandemic is the first step in social distancing. Employees are encouraged to maintain a minimum distance of six feet between each other at all times.

It is not always possible to maintain an appropriate distance between yourself and others. In this case, you should make every effort to avoid direct person-to-person contact with others and to avoid direct spray from a cough or sneeze.

- Avoid shaking hands and other physical forms of greeting others
- If possible, keep an empty desk or cubicle between yourself and the next employee
• Allow adequate space between you and others when passing in close quarters

• When in confined spaces, such as elevators, do not face anyone directly

Sequestration Model
This sequestration model suggests what needs to be considered when developing detailed plans to implement sequestration. To ensure that a sequestration plan is implemented effectively and that enough employees are willing to volunteer to be sequestered, the quality and availability of support services are critical. Support plans should include provisions for the following:

• **Duration:** Determine a minimum duration, using available public health guidance, in order to ensure the availability of a replacement sequestered shift, given the minimum length of an ordered quarantine for exposure. Identify a maximum sequestration duration, driven by the expense associated with providing the support services for shifts and the exposure risk associated with shift changes.

• **Lodging:** Most control center facilities do not have existing designated lodging space, or the conditions were designed for temporary use during more traditional circumstances such as storm responses. Given the extended nature of sequestered shifts, control centers either are retrofitting existing space to accommodate personnel for longer periods of time, or they are procuring sleeping trailers and recreational vehicles to house operators on-site. Accommodations should limit the number of people in each designated sleeping space for comfort with consideration for gender. Current cost assessments identify 6 weeks as cost parity for buying trailers vs. renting them.

• **Family Support:** Connectivity with family members is essential to ensuring the ability of operators to perform their jobs. Addressing unique family requirements such as childcare, medical requirements, transportation needs, and food/groceries should be considered during discussions with volunteers.

• **Food:** Determine the appropriate strategies to provide food to shift personnel, including the frequency of delivery to limit exposure risk from frequent interactions with delivery personnel. Consider the sanitation practices of the food provider to ensure the lowest possible risk. When adequate kitchen facilities are available, groceries can be delivered, and operators can prepare their own food.

Define Requirements
• Define which staff will be sequestered. Various combinations of the following types of personnel may be needed:
  - Operators
  - Technical support staff
  - Outage coordinator
  - Energy procurement
  - Leadership
  - Facilities staff for cleaning and maintenance
  - Food services
Physical security

- Establish plan for rotating employees in and out of sequestration
- Establish screening criteria for employees that are scheduled to rotate into sequestration
- Determine need for incoming shift to shelter-in-place at home and define expectations

**Practices for Shelter-In-Place to be Fit for Duty**

Essential personnel should take precautions, up to and including for them to shelter-in-place. As state and local authorities issue shelter-in-place orders, companies should ask essential personnel to take additional precautions especially for employees scheduled to rotate into sequestration.

- Employee stays at home, no activities outside of the home
- No non-essential visitors to the home
- Do not share a bed or bathroom
- Practice social distancing in the home
- Wash laundry frequently and thoroughly
- Disinfect all high touch surfaces every day
- Monitor for signs of illness and report immediately

**Basic Needs for Sequestered Personnel**

- Sleeping facilities
- Shower facilities
- Laundry service or facilities
- Cots, blankets, pillows, sheets, towels
- Personal products
- Prescription medication
- Meals (consider palatability for long-term consumption)
  - Ordered in—establish contracts with vendors
  - Frozen
  - Non-perishable
- Exercise and recreation equipment
- “Packing list” of items for employees to bring with them into sequestration and other information
- Provisions for immediate families of operators
• Supplemental
  o Health and safety considerations information
  o List of essential provisions to be supplied by the company
  o Personal checklist
  o Wellness tips and employee resources

Maintaining Access Control and Moving Food, Materials, and People in and out of Sequester Area
• Ingress for food and other deliveries
• “Dirty routes” for outsiders that need to enter building for some reason
• Process for support personnel to enter “clean” sequester area, perhaps using Tyvek suits, gloves, masks, etc.
• Screening procedures and tests for personnel rotating into sequestration at turnover
• Procedures for removing an employee that exhibits signs of infection during sequester and cleaning the sequester area
• Turn off all badge readers to force anyone trying to enter facilities to speak with security

Options for Living Facilities
• Inside control center
  o Extents of sequester area
  o Designated uses inside sequester area
  o Signage for sequester area
• On-site trailers/RV hookups
• Offsite hotel accommodations

Considerations for Using Hotel Accommodations
• Entire floor or entire hotel reserved for exclusive use
• Expected length of stay(s)
• No other guests in hotel or, if there are other guests, employees avoid public areas
• Limited number of hotel staff on site
• Rooms stocked with bedding, towels, and other supplies for seven days, with no hotel staff entering the room during that period
• Sequestered employees cleaning their own rooms with supplies provided
• At the end of the week, hotel will clean the rooms and the utility will have “fogging” contractor treat the rooms
- Employees do not eat at the hotel; all meals are provided at the control center

**Additional Considerations**
- Implications of prolonged sequestration on mental health of the employees
- Sequestering of food service and maintenance personnel
- Food trucks or mobile kitchens
- Refrigeration truck for food storage
- Establish supply chain effort to ensure delivery of needed supplies
- Number of volunteers available to be sequestered
- Suitability of facilities for long-term sequester
- Availability of testing to reduce the risk of sequestering an asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic individual who could transmit the disease to others in sequestration
- Leveraging non-sequestered staff to help families of those who are sequestered

**Sequestration Triggers**
Sequestration is likely to be the most effective means of reducing risk to critical control center employees during an epidemic/pandemic, but it is also the most resource- and cost-intensive option to implement. Additionally, sequestration presents additional challenges to employees and their families at a time when stress and uncertainty already are running high. Careful consideration of the circumstances or “triggers” that dictate a decision to enact sequestration is necessary for determining if and when sequestration is the best option.

The decision to enact sequestration is driven by individual organization risk assessments and should not be based on any one criterion or data point alone, but it should consider the situation for a specific control center holistically. Considerations may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The number of people showing symptoms or testing positive as a percentage of the population for the government jurisdiction (county or municipality) where the control center is located. This is largely based on the availability of testing for COVID-19 and requires constant communication with staff who are both on- and off-shift to monitor their health. Consideration should be given both to the location of the control center and the home addresses of employees who commute from outside the jurisdiction where the control center is located.

- The number of people showing symptoms or testing positive who perform certain job functions, primarily based on particular certified skills and the ability to hire a replacement. Acceptable risk should be based on the minimum staffing requirements of the control center and should include the availability of a reserve shift for critical position backfills. For example, shift supervisors are commonly certified in all positions in the control center, and the unavailability of more than one-third of a single organization’s shift supervisors could compromise operations.

- The rate of infection spread across a geographic region. Considering the rapid spread of COVID-19, special care should be taken to identify the point at which control center personnel are more likely than not to come into contact with an infected individual during their off-shift hours. The degree of risk to an
employee is affected by the government and private-sector measures implemented to limit the spread of the virus, such as the closing of schools, daycare centers, public venues, restaurants, etc., or the implementation of a state- or city-wide shelter-in-place mandate.

- Regulatory directive