

CHAPTER 25. SUBSTANTIVE RULES APPLICABLE TO ELECTRIC SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter S. WHOLESALE MARKETS.

§25.503. Oversight of Wholesale Market Participants.

- (a) **Purpose.** The purpose of this section is to establish the standards that the commission will apply in monitoring the activities of entities participating in the wholesale electricity markets, including markets administered by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), and enforcing the Public Utility Regulatory Act (PURA) and ERCOT procedures relating to wholesale markets. The standards contained in this rule are necessary to:
- (1) protect customers from unfair, misleading, and deceptive practices in the wholesale markets, including ERCOT-administered markets;
 - (2) ensure that ancillary services necessary to facilitate the reliable transmission of electric energy are available at reasonable prices;
 - (3) afford customers safe, reliable, and reasonably priced electricity;
 - (4) ensure that all wholesale market participants observe all scheduling, operating, reliability, and settlement policies, rules, guidelines, and procedures established in the ERCOT procedures;
 - (5) clarify prohibited activities in the wholesale markets, including ERCOT-administered markets;
 - (6) monitor and mitigate market power as authorized by the Public Utility Regulatory Act (PURA) §39.157(a) and prevent market power abuses;
 - (7) clarify the standards and criteria the commission will use when reviewing wholesale market activities;
 - (8) clarify the remedies for non-compliance with the Protocols relating to wholesale markets; and
 - (9) prescribe ERCOT's role in enforcing ERCOT procedures relating to the reliability of the regional electric network and accounting for the production and delivery among generators and all other market participants, and monitoring and obtaining compliance with operating standards within the ERCOT regional network.
- (b) **Application.** This section applies to all market entities, as defined in subsection (c) of this section.
- (c) **Definitions.** The following words and terms when used in this section shall have the following meaning, unless the context indicates otherwise:
- (1) **Artificial congestion** — Congestion created when multiple foreseeable options exist for scheduling, dispatching, or operating a resource, and a market participant chooses an option that is not the most economical, that foreseeably creates or exacerbates transmission congestion, and that results in the market participant being paid to relieve the congestion it caused.
 - (2) **Efficient operation of the market** — Operation of the markets administered by ERCOT, consistent with reliability standards, that is characterized by the fullest use of competitive auctions to procure ancillary services, minimal cost socialization, and the most economical utilization of resources, subject to necessary operational and other constraints.
 - (3) **ERCOT procedures** — Documents that contain the scheduling, operating, planning, reliability, and settlement procedures, standards, and criteria that are public and in effect in the ERCOT power region, including the ERCOT Protocols and ERCOT Operating Guides as amended from time to time but excluding ERCOT's internal administrative procedures. The Protocols generally govern when there are inconsistencies between the Protocols and the Operating Guides, except when ERCOT staff, consistent with subsection (i) of this section, determines that a provision contained in the Operating Guides is technically superior for the efficient and reliable operation of the electric network.
 - (4) **Market entity** — Any person or entity participating in the ERCOT-administered wholesale market, including, but not limited to, a load serving entity (including a municipally owned utility and an electric cooperative,) a power marketer, a transmission and distribution utility, a power generation company, a qualifying facility, an exempt wholesale generator, ERCOT,

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and any entity conducting planning, scheduling, or operating activities on behalf of, or controlling the activities of, such market entities.

- (5) **Market participant** – A market entity other than ERCOT.
 - (6) **Resource** — Facilities capable of providing electrical energy or load capable of reducing or increasing the need for electrical energy or providing short-term reserves into the ERCOT system. This includes generation resources and loads acting as resources (LaaRs).
- (d) **Standards and criteria for enforcement of ERCOT procedures and PURA.** The commission will monitor the activities of market entities to determine if such activities are consistent with ERCOT procedures; whether they constitute market power abuses or are unfair, misleading, or deceptive practices affecting customers; and whether they are consistent with the proper accounting for the production and delivery of electricity among generators and other market participants. When reviewing the activities of a market entity, the commission will consider whether the activity was conducted in a manner that:
- (1) adversely affected customers in a material way through the use of unfair, misleading, or deceptive practices;
 - (2) materially reduced the competitiveness of the market, including whether the activity unfairly impacted other market participants in a way that restricts competition;
 - (3) disregarded its effect on the reliability of the ERCOT electric system; or
 - (4) interfered with the efficient operation of the market.
- (e) **Guiding ethical standards.** Each market participant is expected to:
- (1) observe all applicable laws and rules;
 - (2) schedule, bid, and operate its resources in a manner consistent with ERCOT procedures to support the efficient and reliable operation of the ERCOT electric system; and
 - (3) not engage in activities and transactions that create artificial congestion or artificial supply shortages, artificially inflate revenues or volumes, or manipulate the market or market prices in any way.
- (f) **Duties of market entities.**
- (1) Each market participant shall be knowledgeable about ERCOT procedures.
 - (2) A market participant shall comply with ERCOT procedures and any official interpretation of the Protocols issued by ERCOT or the commission.
 - (A) If a market participant disagrees with any provision of the Protocols or any official interpretation of the Protocols, it may seek an amendment of the Protocols as provided for in the Protocols, appeal an ERCOT official interpretation to the commission, or both.
 - (B) A market participant appealing an official interpretation of the Protocols or seeking an amendment to the Protocols shall comply with the Protocols unless and until the interpretation is officially changed or the amendment is officially adopted.
 - (C) A market participant may be excused from compliance with ERCOT instructions or Protocol requirements only if such non-compliance is due to communication or equipment failure beyond the reasonable control of the market participant; if compliance would jeopardize public health and safety or the reliability of the ERCOT transmission grid, or create risk of bodily harm or damage to the equipment; if compliance would be inconsistent with facility licensing, environmental, or legal requirements; if required by applicable law; or for other good cause. A market participant is excused under this subparagraph only for so long as the condition continues.

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- (3) Whenever the Protocols require that a market participant make its “best effort” or a “good faith effort” to meet a requirement, or similar language, the market participant shall act in accordance with the requirement unless:
 - (A) it is not technically possible to do so;
 - (B) doing so would jeopardize public health and safety or the reliability of the ERCOT transmission grid, or would create a risk of bodily harm or damage to the equipment;
 - (C) doing so would be inconsistent with facility licensing, environmental, or legal requirements; or
 - (D) other good cause exists for excusing the requirement.
- (4) When a market participant is not able to comply with a Protocol requirement or official interpretation of a requirement, or honor a formal commitment to ERCOT, the market participant has an obligation to notify ERCOT immediately upon learning of such constraints and to notify ERCOT when the problem ceases. A market participant who does not comply with a Protocol requirement or official interpretation of a requirement, or honor a formal commitment to ERCOT, has the burden to demonstrate, in any commission proceeding in which the failure to comply is raised, why it cannot comply with the Protocol requirement or official interpretation of the requirement, or honor the commitment.
- (5) The commission staff may request information from a market participant concerning a notification of failure to comply with a Protocol requirement or official interpretation of a requirement, or honor a formal commitment to ERCOT. The market participant shall provide a response that is detailed and reasonably complete, explaining the circumstances surrounding the alleged failure, and shall provide documents and other materials relating to such alleged failure to comply. The response shall be submitted to the commission staff within five business days of a written request for information, unless commission staff agrees to an extension.
- (6) A market participant’s bids of energy and ancillary services shall be from resources that are available and capable of performing, and shall be feasible within the limits of the operating characteristics indicated in the resource plan, as defined in the Protocols, and consistent with the applicable ramp rate, as specified in the Protocols.
- (7) All statements, data and information provided by a market participant to market publications and publishers of surveys and market indices for the computation of an industry price index shall be true, accurate, reasonably complete, and shall be consistent with the market participant’s activities, subject to generally accepted standards of confidentiality and industry standards. Market participants shall exercise due diligence to prevent the release of materially inaccurate or misleading information.
- (8) A market entity has an obligation to provide accurate and factual information and shall not submit false or misleading information, or omit material information, in any communication with ERCOT or with the commission. Market entities shall exercise due diligence to ensure adherence to this provision throughout the entity.
- (9) A market participant shall comply with all reporting requirements governing the availability and maintenance of a generating unit or transmission facility, including outage scheduling reporting requirements. A market participant shall immediately notify ERCOT when capacity changes or resource limitations occur that materially affect the availability of a unit or facility, the anticipated operation of its resources, or the ability to comply with ERCOT dispatch instructions.
- (10) A market participant shall comply with requests for information or data by ERCOT as specified by the Protocols or ERCOT instructions within the time specified by ERCOT instructions, or such other time agreed to by ERCOT and the market participant.
- (11) When a Protocol provision or its applicability is unclear, or when a situation arises that is not contemplated under the Protocols, a market entity seeking clarification of the Protocols shall

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use the Protocol Revision Request (PRR) process provided in the Protocols. If the PRR process is impractical or inappropriate under the circumstances, the market entity may use the process for requesting formal Protocol clarifications or interpretations described in subsection (i) of this section. This provision is not intended to discourage day to day informal communication between market participants and ERCOT staff.

- (12) A market participant operating in the ERCOT markets or a member of the ERCOT staff who identifies a provision in the ERCOT procedures that produces an outcome inconsistent with the efficient and reliable operation of the ERCOT-administered markets shall call the provision to the attention of the appropriate ERCOT subcommittee. All market participants shall cooperate with the ERCOT subcommittees, ERCOT staff, and the commission staff to develop Protocols that are clear and consistent.
 - (13) A market participant shall establish and document internal procedures that instruct its affected personnel on how to implement ERCOT procedures according to the standards delineated in this section. Each market participant shall establish clear lines of accountability for its market practices.
- (g) **Prohibited activities.** Any act or practice of a market participant that materially and adversely affects the reliability of the regional electric network or the proper accounting for the production and delivery of electricity among market participants is considered a “prohibited activity.” The term “prohibited activity” in this subsection excludes acts or practices expressly allowed by the Protocols or by official interpretations of the Protocols and acts or practices conducted in compliance with express directions from ERCOT or commission rule or order or other legal authority. The term “prohibited activity” includes, but is not limited to, the following acts and practices that have been found to cause prices that are not reflective of competitive market forces or to adversely affect the reliability of the electric network:
- (1) A market participant shall not schedule, operate, or dispatch its generating units in a way that creates artificial congestion.
 - (2) A market participant shall not execute pre-arranged offsetting trades of the same product among the same parties, or through third party arrangements, which involve no economic risk and no material net change in beneficial ownership.
 - (3) A market participant shall not offer reliability products to the market that cannot or will not be provided if selected.
 - (4) A market participant shall not conduct trades that result in a misrepresentation of the financial condition of the organization.
 - (5) A market participant shall not engage in fraudulent behavior related to its participation in the wholesale market.
 - (6) A market participant shall not collude with other market participants to manipulate the price or supply of power, allocate territories, customers or products, or otherwise unlawfully restrain competition. This provision should be interpreted in accordance with federal and state antitrust statutes and judicially-developed standards under such statutes regarding collusion.
 - (7) A market participant shall not engage in market power abuse. Withholding of production, whether economic withholding or physical withholding, by a market participant who has market power, constitutes an abuse of market power.
- (h) **Defenses.** The term “prohibited activity” in subsection (g) of this section excludes acts or practices that would otherwise be included, if the market entity establishes that its conduct served a legitimate business purpose consistent with prices set by competitive market forces; and that it did not know, and could not reasonably anticipate, that its actions would inflate prices, adversely affect the reliability of the regional electric network, or adversely affect the proper accounting for the production and delivery

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of electricity; or, if applicable, that it exercised due diligence to prevent the excluded act or practice. The defenses established in this subsection may also be asserted in instances in which a market participant is alleged to have violated subsection (f) of this section. A market entity claiming an exclusion or defense under this subsection, or any other type of affirmative defense, has the burden of proof to establish all of the elements of such exclusion or defense.

- (i) **Official interpretations and clarifications regarding the Protocols.** A market entity seeking an interpretation or clarification of the Protocols shall use the PRR process contained in the Protocols whenever possible. If an interpretation or clarification is needed to address an unforeseen situation and there is not sufficient time to submit the issue to the PRR process, a market entity may seek an official Protocol interpretation or clarification from ERCOT in accordance with this subsection.
- (1) ERCOT shall develop a process for formally addressing requests for clarification of the Protocols submitted by market participants or issuing official interpretations regarding the application of Protocol provisions and requirements. ERCOT shall respond to the requestor within ten business days of ERCOT's receipt of the request for interpretation or clarification with either an official Protocol interpretation or a recommendation that the requestor take the request through the PRR process.
 - (2) ERCOT shall designate one or more ERCOT officials who will be authorized to receive requests for clarification from, and issue responses to market participants, and to issue official interpretations on behalf of ERCOT regarding the application of Protocol provisions and requirements.
 - (3) The designated ERCOT official shall provide a copy of the clarification request to commission staff upon receipt. The ERCOT official shall consult with ERCOT operational or legal staff as appropriate and with commission staff before issuing an official Protocol clarification or interpretation.
 - (4) The designated ERCOT official may decide, in consultation with the commission staff, that the language for which a clarification is requested is ambiguous or for other reason beyond ERCOT's ability to clarify, in which case the ERCOT official shall inform the requestor, who may take the request through the PRR process provided for in the Protocols.
 - (5) All official Protocol clarifications or interpretations that ERCOT issues in response to a market participant's formal request or upon ERCOT's own initiative shall be sent out in a market bulletin with the appropriate effective date specified to inform all market participants, and a copy of the clarification or interpretation shall be maintained in a manner that is accessible to market participants. Such response shall not contain information that would identify the requesting market participant.
 - (6) A market participant may freely communicate informally with ERCOT employees, however, the opinion of an individual ERCOT staff member not issued as an official interpretation of ERCOT pursuant to this subsection may not be relied upon as an affirmative defense by a market participant.
- (j) **Role of ERCOT in enforcing operating standards.** ERCOT shall develop and submit for commission approval a process to monitor material occurrences of non-compliance with ERCOT procedures, which shall mean occurrences that have the potential to impede ERCOT operations, or represent a risk to system reliability. Non-compliance indicators monitored by ERCOT shall include, but shall not be limited to, material occurrences of schedule control error, failing resource plan performance measures as established by ERCOT, failure to follow dispatch instructions within the required time, failure to meet ancillary services obligations, failure to submit mandatory bids or offers that may apply, and other instances of non-compliance of a similar magnitude.

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- (1) ERCOT shall keep a record of all such material occurrences of non-compliance with ERCOT procedures and shall develop a system for tracking recurrence of such material occurrences of non-compliance.
 - (2) ERCOT shall promptly provide information to and respond to questions from market participants to allow the market participant to understand and respond to alleged material occurrences of non-compliance with ERCOT procedures. However, this requirement does not relieve the market participant's operator from responding to the ERCOT operator's instruction in a timely manner and should not be interpreted as allowing the market participant's operator to argue with the ERCOT operator as to the need for compliance.
 - (3) ERCOT shall keep a record of the resolution of such material occurrences of non-compliance and of remedial actions taken by the market participant in each instance.
 - (4) ERCOT shall inform the commission staff immediately if the material occurrence of non-compliance is not resolved after the system operator has orally informed the market participant of the problem. The occurrence is not resolved if:
 - (A) the same instance of non-compliance is repeated more than once in a six-month period; or
 - (B) the occurrence continues after ERCOT has first orally notified the operator of the market participant, and subsequently notified, orally or in writing, the supervisor of the operator of the market participant.
- (k) **Standards for record keeping.**
- (1) A market participant who schedules through a qualified scheduling entity (QSE) that submits schedules to ERCOT on behalf of more than one market participants shall maintain records to show scheduling and bidding information for all schedules and bids that its QSE has submitted to ERCOT on its behalf, by interval.
 - (2) All market participants and ERCOT shall maintain records relative to market participants' activities in the ERCOT-administered markets to show:
 - (A) information on transactions, as defined in §25.93(c)(3) of this title (relating to Quarterly Wholesale Electricity Transaction Reports), including the date, type of transaction, amount of transaction, and entities involved;
 - (B) information and documentation of all planned and forced generation and transmission outages including all documentation necessary to document the reason for the outage;
 - (C) information described under this subsection including transaction information, information on pricing, settlement information, and other information that would be relevant to an investigation under this section, and that has been disclosed to market publications and publishers of surveys and price indices, including the date, information disclosed, and the name of the employees involved in providing the information as well as the publisher to whom it was provided; and
 - (D) reports of the market participant's financial information given to external parties, including the date, financial results reported, and the party to whom financial information was reported, if applicable.
 - (3) After the effective date of this section, all records referred to in this subsection except verbally dispatch instructions (VDIs) shall be kept for a minimum of three years from the date of the event. ERCOT shall keep VDI records for a minimum of two years. All records shall be made available to the commission for inspection upon request.
 - (4) A market participant shall, upon request from the commission, provide the information referred to in this subsection to the commission, and may, if applicable, provide it under a confidentiality agreement or protective order pursuant to §22.71(d) of this title (relating to Filing of Pleadings, Documents, and Other Material).

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- (l) **Investigation.** The commission staff may initiate an informal fact-finding review based on a complaint or upon its own initiative to obtain information regarding facts, conditions, practices, or matters that it may find necessary or proper to ascertain in order to evaluate whether any market entity has violated any provision of this section.
- (1) The commission staff will contact the market entity whose activities are in question to provide the market entity an opportunity to explain its activities. The commission staff may require the market entity to provide information reasonably necessary for the purposes described in this subsection.
 - (2) If the market entity asserts that the information requested by commission staff is confidential, the information shall be provided to commission staff as confidential information related to settlement negotiations or other asserted bases for confidentiality pursuant to §22.71(d)(4) of this title.
 - (3) If after conducting its fact-finding review, the commission staff determines that a market entity may have violated this section, the commission staff may request that the commission initiate a formal investigation against the market entity pursuant to §22.241 of this title (relating to Investigations).
 - (4) If, as a result of its investigation, commission staff determines that there is evidence of a violation of this section by a market entity, the commission staff may request that the commission initiate appropriate enforcement action against the market entity. A notice of violation requesting administrative penalties shall comply with the requirements of §22.246 of this title (relating to Administrative Penalties). Additionally, for alleged violations that have been reviewed in the informal procedure established by this subsection, the commission staff shall include as part of its prima facie case:
 - (A) a statement either that –
 - (i) the commission staff has conducted the investigation allowed by this section; or
 - (ii) the market participant has failed to comply with the requirements of paragraph (5) of this subsection;
 - (B) a summary of the evidence indicating to the commission staff that the market participant has violated one of the provisions of this section;
 - (C) a summary of any evidence indicating to the commission staff that the market participant benefited from the alleged violation or materially harmed the market; and
 - (D) a statement that the staff has concluded that the market participant failed to demonstrate, in the course of the investigation, the applicability of an exclusion or affirmative defense under subsection (h) of this section.
 - (5) A market entity subject to an informal fact-finding review or a formal investigation by the commission has an obligation to fully cooperate with the investigation, to make its company representatives available within a reasonable period of time to discuss the subject of the investigation with the commission staff, and to respond to the commission staff's requests for information within a reasonable time frame as requested by the commission staff.
 - (6) The procedure for informal fact-finding review established in this subsection does not prevent any person or commission staff from filing a formal complaint with the commission pursuant to §22.242 of this title (relating to Complaints) or pursuing other relief available by law.
- (m) **Remedies.** If the commission finds that a market entity is in violation of this section, the commission may seek or impose any legal remedy it determines appropriate for the violation involved.