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Infrastructure Interdependencies Workshop Highlights Critical Partnerships to Improve Security and Resilience

On December 2-3, 2013, DOE's Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE), in coordination with the National Association for State Energy Officials (NASEO), conducted the Energy Assurance and Interdependency Workshop in Washington, DC.

The objective of the workshop was to educate participants and increase awareness about interconnected energy systems and their cascading impacts on other critical infrastructure and essential services such as transportation, water, food, finance, emergency services, and telecommunications in the aftermath of an event.

Ms. Alice Lippert addresses the audience during the workshop.

Over 175 participants representing Federal, State, and local governments, State energy offices, public utility commissions, homeland security, emergency management, and environmental protection offices attended the two-day event along with members of industry trade organizations and the private sector.

NASEO Executive Director David Terry welcomed the participants and discussed formulating a vision for the future for infrastructure modernization, and that the health, environmental, and economic advantages gained through increased resiliency will help us "leapfrog" to the next generation of infrastructure.

The Energy Department's Assistant Secretary for Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability Patricia Hoffman pointed out in her opening remarks that recognizing that infrastructure is interconnected and understanding the vulnerabilities help states determine investment and is critical in sequencing because the time of restoration within the energy sector impacts the priorities of other infrastructure sectors as well.

Senior Technical Advisor Alice Lippert expressed the importance of infrastructure interdependencies, their existence at multiple levels, and their far-reaching impacts. She noted they can cause cascading failures with significant impacts to our health, safety, and wellbeing, along with the economy, environment, and even national security. Miss Lippert also mentioned that infrastructure interdependencies can impede emergency response and recovery if they are not fully understood.

Through a series of threat scenarios and vignettes, which included long-term drought, severe storms and flooding, and a cyber incident, industry owners and operators evaluated the immediate and long-term effects of the scenario, provided an operational system overview, and gauged their own sector's response to the actions of other sectors. In addition, State and local governments were able to evaluate their energy emergency preparedness and energy assurance plans.

Among key issues discussed during the final session of the workshop were the broad cross-sector impacts caused by water shortages; transportation and evacuation concerns; collecting the right information during events; communication among and between bordering states; and sector preparedness for long-term power disruptions.

Workshop photographs courtesy of Jeff Pillon, NASEO

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DOE Strengthens Partnerships with Tribal Nations

November 14, 2013 marked the Obama Administration's fifth consecutive White House Tribal Nations Conference. This annual White House event, which is hosted by the U.S. Department of the Interior, serves to reinforce the President's commitment to strengthening the government-to-government relationship between Indian tribes and the Office of the President and to continued progress to improve the lives of Native Americans. Elected tribal leaders from each of the 566 federally recognized tribes and Alaska Native Corporations were invited to this national gathering to meet with the President, thirteen of his Cabinet members, and a number of other senior government officials.

During his remarks, Secretary Moniz announced that the Department had selected nine tribes to receive over $7.2 million for the deployment of clean energy projects. These projects which include the installation of wind turbines and a biomass-fueled combined heat and power system, will save money, enhance tribal energy security, and provide jobs and new business opportunities.

OE Director of Preparedness and Response, Stewart Cedres, far right, and Kevin Bonds, left, listen as tribal leader Tommy Christian speaks. Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of the Interior

A number of senior officials from DOE participated in the conference's numerous breakout sessions covering topics selected via the input received from tribal leaders. OE Director of Preparedness and Response Stewart Cedres participated in the breakout session Building Safe Tribal Communities: Law Enforcement , Public Safety, and Disaster Response in Tribal Communities. During the breakout session, a representative from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) in North Carolina shared his tribe's experiences as the first to receive a Presidential Disaster Declaration.

Amendments to the Stafford Act in January through the Sandy Recovery Improve-ment Act of 2013 now enable tribes to apply directly to FEMA for emergency assistance. Following a period of severe storms and flooding that produced landslides and mudslides across tribal land, President Obama issued a Disaster Declaration for the EBCI on March 1st – the first such declaration ever issued to a tribal government. While tribal nations still have the option of receiving assistance from FEMA through the States (provided they do not receive a separate declaration for the same incident), prior to the amendment, tribes had to rely upon the State to request a Major Disaster or Emergency Declaration under the Stafford Act.

Secretary Moniz Announces the Release of Cybersecurity Tools to Help the Oil & Natural Gas Sector

As part of an ongoing committment to support the private sector and utilities in their efforts to strengthen protection of the nation's oil and natural gas infrastructure and the electric grid from cyber attack, U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz announced the Department'srelease of new tools to help organizations measure and improve their own cyber capabilities. The Oil and Natural Gas (ONG) Cybersecurity Capability Maturity Model (C2M2) will leverage the Electricity Subsector Cybersecurity Capability Maturity Model (ES-C2M2) which was launched in 2012 as part of a White House initiative led by the Department of Energy and developed with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), industry, and other stakeholders to support the private sector and utilities in assessment and enhancement of their own cyber efforts.

The ONG C2M2 is designed to strengthen cybersecurity capabilities in the oil and natural gas subsector by identifying capability gaps of individual organizations and in the future, allowing for an aggregated picture of common capability gaps across the sector. The C2M2 provides a mechanism to evaluate, prioritize, and improve cybersecurity capabilities and is comprised of a common set of industry-vetted cybersecurity practices, grouped into ten domains and arranged according to maturity level. The C2M2 evaluation tool enables organizations to evaluate their cybersecurity practices against C2M2 cybersecurity practices. Based upon this comparison, a score is assigned for each domain. Scores can then be compared to a desired score – determined by the organization's risk tolerance for each domain. Development of the ONG-C2M2 involved a series of workshops and individual pilot evaluations with the private sector to draft a maturity model that can be used to better protect the oil and natural gas infrastructure. As a result of this consensus-driven process, a voluntary ONG-C2M2 program, similar to the current ES-C2M2 program, will provide stakeholders with guidance, an evaluation toolkit, and facilitated self-evaluations.

Along with the ONG-C2M2 and an updated version of the ES-C2M2, DOE also released a sector-neutral version of the model that can be used by any business or organization, regardless of size, function, or ownership structure. Organizations can modify the model according to their own sectors' needs.

Please visit http://energy.gov/articles/energy-department-broadens-public-private-initiative-help-more-organizations-strengthen-0 for further information.