

***Resolution on Electric Utility Industry-Wide Response to Major Outage-Triggering Events***

**WHEREAS**, No mission is more critical for the nation's electric power industry than maintaining a reliable electricity supply. Electricity powers our homes, our businesses and industries, and our way of life. As our use of digital technologies continues to grow, customers have increasing expectations and dependence on electricity; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Electric utilities constantly plan for emergency situations that could impact their ability to generate or deliver power, and the industry has a strong track record of maintaining high levels of reliability; *and*

**WHEREAS**, No matter how well the industry is prepared, hurricanes, earthquakes, storms, and other natural and man-made disasters can cause significant damage to the electric grid, creating widespread power outages; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Given the essential nature of electricity, one of the most challenging tasks that electric utilities face is safely and efficiently restoring power following a major storm, natural disaster, or other outage-triggering event; *and*

**WHEREAS**, A speedy restoration process requires significant logistical expertise, along with skilled workers and specialized equipment, and utilities often turn to the electric utility industry's mutual assistance programs – voluntary partnerships of electric utilities across the nation – to help restore power safely and efficiently; *and*

**WHEREAS**, The electric utility industry's mutual assistance programs provide a formal, yet flexible, process for electric utilities to request support from other utilities in parts of the nation that have not been affected by major outage events. When called upon, a utility will send skilled restoration workers – both utility workers and contractors – along with specialized equipment to help with the restoration efforts of a fellow electric utility; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Utility restoration workers involved in mutual assistance typically travel many miles to help the requesting utility to rebuild power lines, replace poles, and restore power to customers; there is a critical need for States to facilitate the transportation of utility mutual assistance crews to the impacted area and their subsequent return to their home service territories; *and*

**WHEREAS**, The current mutual assistance programs work well for regional events. However, more severe storms, such as Superstorm Sandy in 2012, require resources from more than one region, which led the electric power industry to recognize the value of enhancing mutual assistance programs to scale it to a national level in order to optimize restoration efforts following events that impact a significant population or several regions across the U.S.; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Going forward, in response to events that may impact a significant population or several regions across the U.S. and require resources from more than one region, a standing and rotating committee of senior-level utility executives representing all regions of the U.S. will oversee a framework for national allocation of mutual assistance resources (utility restoration

workers, contractors, and spare materials) in a safe, efficient, coordinated, and equitable manner; *and*

**WHEREAS**, Utilities may activate mutual assistance based on a storm's forecasted impacts in order to be adequately prepared to respond quickly, especially when a large scale storm with significant impacts is expected, regardless of the actual path of the storm and its realized impacts; *and*

**WHEREAS**, A timely and efficient restoration process requires a smooth transition of resources from other regions into affected areas, regardless of State boundary, and recognizing that utility service territories often extend beyond State boundaries, and restoration work often will involve multiple jurisdictions, electric utilities must have flexibility to move resources to outage locations; *now, therefore be it*

**RESOLVED**, That the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, convened at its 125<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida, recognizes that a more efficient resource allocation—in response to an event that impacts a significant population or several regions across the U.S.—managed by the electric industry would further improve public safety, accelerate restoration, and reduce potential economic consequences; *and be it further*

**RESOLVED**, That essential to effective power system restoration is the need for the electric industry to have the flexibility to carry out equitable and efficient allocation of mutual assistance resources on a national level; *and be it further*

**RESOLVED**, That all levels of government can facilitate the electric industry's mutual assistance power restoration efforts by working with industry to remove potential barriers that are created by existing or emerging policies that may interfere with an industry-wide response; *and be it further*

**RESOLVED**, That State emergency response plans allow for State public utility commissions to coordinate more closely with State officials including transportation departments, agencies, or authorities to expedite the passage of responding utility vehicles and contractors through road, bridge, and tunnel tolls; *and be it further*

**RESOLVED**, That, State public utility commissions can support State emergency response plans and efforts by engaging with their State counterparts including transportation departments, agencies, or authorities to expedite transportation of restoration workers and equipment by suspending enforcement of weigh station requirements for utility vehicles and contractors travelling to the impacted area; *and be it further*

**RESOLVED**, That consistent with that support of State emergency response plans and efforts, State public utility commissions can work with these State official counterparts including to expedite transportation to the impacted area by suspending enforcement of fuel tax agreement and multi-State registration requirements for emergency responders, as well as utility vehicles and utility contractors travelling to the impacted area; *and be it further*

**RESOLVED**, That State public utility commissions can also work with these State officials to broadly disseminate toll and weigh station procedures for utility trucks and develop a process to inform all appropriate State and local agencies and departments, as well as State and local law enforcement, of any issued waivers to expedite the transportation of restoration workers and equipment; *and be it further*

**RESOLVED**, That State public utility commissions can work together to support emergency response plans and efforts, which can result in reciprocity that benefits customers within each of their States.

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*Sponsored by the Committee on Critical Infrastructure*

*Recommended by the NARUC Board of Directors November 19, 2013*

*Adopted by the NARUC Committee of the Whole November 20, 2013*