**Northwest Public Power Association**

**Resolution 2023-03**

**Protecting the Bulk Electric System from Cyber and Physical Attacks**

**Background**

NWPPA supports protecting electric infrastructure from cyber and physical attacks and its members are actively engaged in efforts to protect the electric grid from cyber and physical attacks to ensure a reliable and safe electric system.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) is the nation’s electric reliability organization authorized by Congress and certified by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to develop technical standards that ensure reliability – including the cyber and physical security – of the bulk electric system. NERC standards are developed with input from technical experts in all sectors of the North American utility industry and FERC approves or remands the standards for modification. Once approved, they are mandatory and enforceable. Nuclear reactors are also subject to mandatory cyber standards required by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

Nevertheless, Congress remains concerned that the North American electric grid is vulnerable to attack and has debated and enacted various legislative proposals to strengthen the security of the bulk electric system. In the aftermath of several high-profile cyber and ransomware attacks as well as increases in physical attacks to electric infrastructure, there has been a growing call from Congress for additional mandatory cyber and ransomware incident reporting requirements and a review of the effectiveness of existing reliability standards for the physical security of the electric grid. Attention has also focused on vulnerabilities not in the design and operation of the grid itself, but in the supply chain, where utilities have little control over manufacturing practices, the insertion of malware, or business operations of third parties.

**NWPPA’s Position**

* NWPPA opposes measures that would undermine the process for setting reliability standards through NRC or FERC and NERC rulemaking.
* NWPPA supports addressing supply chain vulnerabilities in a way that protects utilities and other end-use consumers of products and software, rather than requiring utilities to police vendors.
* NWPPA supports financial and technical assistance to small utilities to enhance cyber and physical security.

Origination Date: 2009. Revised in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, 2022, and 2023.